

a thesis supervised by Prof. Joy Hendry & Dr. Chris McDonaugh

Modernity's Children



Generational Change, Identity and Global Citizenship in Japan

submitted for the PhD
dept. of anthropology, Oxford Brookes University,
June 2004

Bruce white

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Abstract—Modernity's Children

This thesis attempts to identify and document a generational movement in the conception and creation of Japanese collective identity—to understand its precedents and consequences. From an examination of how Japan's early 20th century agricultural majority saw themselves in the world around them throughout Japan's period of industrialisation, to understanding the social landscape and identities of some of Japan's contemporary youth, the thesis charts a generational movement away from the influence of the State and nation-builders, and towards a more self-determined collective imagination which puts the individual in charge of the creation of Japaneseness. In contrast to their elders, young people create a multi-cultural and inclusive Japanese identity which incorporates local and global diversity and establishes them as equal stakeholders in a world of many like-others.

Through life stories, interviews, case studies and community ethnography, the thesis attempts to understand how this generational movement has occurred because of the changes that modernity has wrought on the local arenas of Japanese life—reorganising family and community systems and memberships, and altering the perception and definition of what it means to be socially and imaginatively “mobile”. It is these local-level changes—rather than any ‘top-down’ ‘globalising’ or ‘westernising’ forces—that have most changed the concurrent creation of Japanese collective identity. For the younger generations of Japan and of other industrialised societies too, the previous generations’ attempts to come to terms with these changes have left them with a comparative freedom to re-conceive the borders and boundaries of collective identity, and to incorporate their experience of local diversity into a template of diversity-acknowledging cultural and national identity. The thesis concludes, however, that these new identities are not so much original as they are displays of a more well-adjusted adaptation to a modernity which continues to affect us all, ordering our most intimate experiences and perceptions and setting them into expressions of collective memberships and solidarities.

Table of contents

.....

Acknowledgements 5

Map of Japan 8

Introduction—Modernity’s Children 9

PART ONE 80

The Intimate Culture of Identity 80

PART TWO— 114

Familial Worlds 114

 FAMILY 115

 COMMUNITY 183

PART THREE— 239

Collective Identities 239

 CULTURE 240

 NATION 299

PART FOUR— 351

The Divisions of Identity in Society 351

Bibliography..... 409

PAGE

NUMBERING

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Acknowledgements

A work drawing on over five years of preparation, fieldwork and writing must owe a huge debt of gratitude to many many people and organisations. I begin by thanking Sandra Bell, James Carrier, Simon Coleman, Ian Edgar and Michael Carrithers for their encouragement in my going on to do post-graduate research and fuelling my passion for anthropology. Without their care in directing me towards – and away – from certain ideas and approaches, I would have not had the support I needed to get me on the postgraduate track. They all helped me—and continue to help others—to utilise anthropology to its fullest and most worthwhile ends.

I should also like to thank Bill McClure and Durham's East Asian institute for taking me on as a Japanese language student from 1996-97. Bill's openness to taking a post-grad from the anthropology department was complemented by his obvious concern for all his students to master a language he clearly loved. I'm sorry the anthropology department never paid you for the wonderful training I received!

It was at Durham's East Asian department that I also found out about the Monbusho – or Japanese Ministry of Education's – scholarship. This is what made my subsequent three and a half year fieldwork trip to Japan possible and my thanks and admiration go to this programme which continues to bring scholars to Japan from around the world, connecting them together in diverse and stimulating combinations of people and environments. Here I must also send dear thanks to Ines Sanmiguel who was my Monbusho supervisor from 1997-2001. Her warm friendship and efforts to make my research in Japan run as smoothly as possible made a big difference to my quality of life there.

Chris McDonaugh and Joy Hendry have been my long suffering thesis supervisors since 1998. Joy has been a caring and empathetic mentor who has helped me to see deeper into Japan's goings on and has offered great encouragement and support along the way. Chris has been my most critical reader and commentator, and in so doing has helped to balance me—to nudge me back into seeing interpretative anthropology in its purest state—away from other, less grounded perspectives. I have been very grateful for this influence.

A variety of family and friends have also done their utmost to help me along the way. My mother has painstakingly read through this manuscript, correcting mistakes and offering alternatives as well as offering invaluable encouragement and support throughout my writing. Julian Cox has been a wonderfully objective sounding-board for my developing ideas during write-up. This is not to mention the many friends and people in Japan who have helped to make this thesis possible at all. Of particular mention are: Jousaki-San, Fukuchi-San, Hirata-San, Jun, Hiro, Hiroko, Motowaki, Yumi, Hanada-San, Nobu, Ikeda-San, Takeshi, Noriko, and Itami-Sensei.

My dear grandparents Val and Mary Rogers have had complete confidence in and support for my academic progress since my undergraduate years. They have helped support me when grants (or part-time teaching) have not been enough to foot the bills for what I have wanted to do as a post-graduate. Sadly they died while I was finishing my fieldwork in Japan, and while I offer this work in loving memory of them both, I dedicate it to Mary. She was a writer and researcher too, and there is much of her in me, and this.

For

Mary Rogers

(1913-2001)

Map of Japan



Introduction—Modernity's Children

Throughout the progress of modernity, generations of Japanese have been coming to terms with important and fundamental changes in the structures of their families, communities, and in the way that they have felt represented (or not) in a wider cultural or national collective. For the majority of Japanese in agricultural communities, the Meiji-led era of modernisation (1868 onwards) meant that their familial and community structures began to follow rigid nationalistic designs and agendas of the Meiji and post-Meiji elites. Local life became characterised by ever more exclusive and restricted social forms, and cultural and national identities followed suit, generally expounding a single, unitary idea of Japaneseness that was ‘walled-off’ from the world at large (c.f. Sakurai, 2003).

While from the 50s to the 80s many attempts were made to move beyond some of the more restrictive familial and collective structural social designs of the Meiji and post-Meiji era, the rigid social order largely remained unaffected—younger people on the whole became like their elders, despite their protests (c.f. Kotani, 2003, Mathews, 2003, Mori, 2003). Today, there are a multitude of signs that an emerging generation of young people may not be fitting into and following the established life paths, familial models or worldviews of their elders; this generation may move Japan beyond defining itself through its initial transition to modernity. There is a growing body of evidence that the core premises of the ‘old’ social order are being rejected: that instead of being expected to follow a set lifecourse, and being criticised for making ‘out-group’ connections and affiliations, individual choice, diversity,

pluralism, and cross-group connections are valued in this reconfigured social order, and seen as essential (Nakano & Wagatsuma, 2003; Mathews, 2003; Sakurai, 2003).

This thesis argues that the changes that have led to this increased plurality of choice and identity in Japanese families, communities and collectives are to do with a series of modernity-led transitions that have increased physical and “intellectual” mobility over time since the Meiji era, and more precisely, over the last three generations.

Focusing on ‘intellectual mobility’, a concept I shall come to develop, this work shall examine a series of historical and contemporary contexts within which people have sought out new ideas about the type of lives they could lead and the imaginative frameworks that could potentially represent them. These contexts have seen much change over the last three generations as new values, ways of life and collective frameworks have entered into people’s local worlds as alternative ‘options’.

This thesis looks, then, at a process of generational change; exploring the way that subsequent generations have gained access to alternative ways of life and identities which represent that way of life. It shall be exploring how, and in what ways, these generations have seen the familial structures, communities and worldviews of their elders as restrictive, and have sought ways to move beyond them. I shall be looking at the strategies that various individuals have employed to induce mobility in their own and the next generation. Exploring the processes of change occurring between three generations, as well as focusing on young people in particular, I shall be asking what kind of local communities and global worldviews are emerging in response to these generational changes. I shall examine how youth conceive their nation state and their Japanese cultural identity from within their reconfigured local communities, and

whether their altered positions give them access to a form of 'global citizenship' that can be seen to transcend nationality. I suggest also that an interesting future project would be to look at how these younger generations develop over time as they enter and begin to shape the social order and collective identities of Japan.

My conclusion will illustrate how these generational transitions in local communities and collective identities may represent broader patterns of social change in how societies have adjusted and adapted to modernity through the generations. I shall refer to some of the literature that considers the nation state and the world system, asking whether contemporary communities and collective identities signal a need to move beyond interpreting social change in terms of modernity/post-modernity. I will conclude that rather than the contemporary transitions in society signalling a post-modern or post-national era, they illustrate important re-configurations and re-inventions of established and traditional social structures and approaches. Indeed, if there is anything 'new' to be discerned in the social worlds and identities of Japanese youth then it is an empowerment to draw freely on the cultural and familial codes, practices and systems of their grandparents; something that their parents have on the whole been unable to do, due to their need to define a generational solidarity away from these elders.

I shall assert therefore that social change in a collective identity is directly connected with intergenerational dynamics. More broadly, and in a consideration of some of the arising social theory, I shall point to the importance of the relationship between local experience and the collective imaginary, illustrating how the generational changes I observe in Japan reconfigure the local worlds of the respective generations and thus

reorder the social 'template' upon which the collective identity is constructed. Indeed, these generational and hermeneutic¹ transitions have, I state in the conclusion, enabled the individual to direct his/her own life paths and the collective frameworks, narratives, and identities that represent them, away from the designs of the state.

Seen as aiding a process of imaginative emancipation from state-sponsored familial structures and collective identifications, generational change and the modernity that has reconfigured intergenerational relations have presented many challenges to what it has meant to live and feel represented within local and global collectives. In summary, I suggest that it is perhaps in the most recently emerging generation, in the local communities and collectives where Japanese youth are increasingly situated, that we may be seeing the most successful strategies for integrating an increasing set of local life choices within a collective framework that appropriately represents and defines them. The successive generations have all played their part, by adjusting and adapting to the challenges that modernity has brought, in improving intellectual mobility, access to consumption, and encouraging a society of "citizenship". Local and collective memberships can operate within this society as increasingly autonomous from the designs of the state, and are crafted and 'improvised' in response to the immediate needs of their users.

¹ I refer to the relationship between local familial and community worlds and the collective imaginary as hermeneutic, a relationship I shall come to explain further in Part One.

Beginning an anthropological study of Japan: The perspective in the context of pertinent anthropological works and approaches.

This work has been progressively located within a surrounding literature on the anthropology of Japan. There is a large body of anthropological study on Japanese society which makes fieldwork in the country comparatively easy (compared to lesser documented societies) as many concepts and societal structures have already been ‘mapped-out’, so to speak. The amount of work produced on Japanese society, however, makes any new attempt or focus somewhat formidable as one needs to be careful not only that one doesn’t end up ‘reinventing the wheel’, but also that any new efforts are placed in the streams of knowledge and observations that have gone before.

In beginning to approach the anthropological literature on Japan, I soon found that I needed to filter the amount of available anthropological work to my particular field of interest. My initial ideas on what my research would focus on were related to the changing concepts of the Japanese cultural and national identity, the degree to which young people held different ideas on what it meant to be Japanese, what and who the nation could include and what and who it could not. This perspective had arisen from previous work I had conducted in Canada which had identified generational trends in the national identity—young people moving away from seeing Canada defined as Anglo-colonial vis-à-vis Native Americans, to seeing it defined as multicultural Canadian vis-à-vis a largely unsuccessful U.S.A. melting pot².

² See White (1996).

Literature that focuses on changing conceptions of what it means to be Japanese falls into one of two camps—works that suggest there may be new ways to think about Japanese society and that challenge what is broadly seen as a culture of homogeneity, and works that look at Japanese youth in particular, attempting to understand the divergent ways in which they live out their lives, form particular kinds of groups and see the world in different ways from their elders.

Camp #1 The 'Pluralize Japan' Projects

In her article “The Other in Japanese Advertising”, Creighton (1995) falls into the first of these camps by demonstrating that Japanese use foreigners to confirm a sense of their own special unique cultural characteristics, and also by suggesting that this use of the foreign other may now be changing. Where Creighton sees that foreigners are traditionally used to “reaffirm the homogeneous unity and uniqueness upon which Japanese identity is largely based,” (pp. 155), now there may be more direct experience of foreigners which helps to pluralize and diversify the “essentialized category that reduces complex variations between them” (pp 137). Although Creighton’s paper is more to do with exemplifying the use of foreigners to produce and reflect a unitary vision of Japaneseness than presenting an argument for the undoing of that cultural and national conception, we are left with a rather optimistic take: that in the midst of representations stressing difference, media agencies are putting forward “intentional promptings to encourage Japanese of all ages to reflect on their own degree of acceptance of others...” (pp 157).

If Creighton paints a picture of an entrenched homogeneous Japanese identity on the cusp of a possible reinvention, a variety of other writers are broadly concerned with attempts to represent Japan as consisting of many, rather than one, set of cultural norms, lifestyles and collective ideas of Japaneseness (see Miller, 2003; Gerow, 2002). These writers seem variously motivated; not only are they attempting to understand internal changes occurring in Japanese society, but are also anxious to break apart the stereotypes and images of Japan as a homogeneous and unitary cultural zone (c.f. Hendry, 1995; Sugimoto, 1997).

For Martinez, the motivation seems split across these very lines. The exploration of popular culture, the subject of her edited collection, involves understanding that there are “many Japans” rather than just one, but at the same time we see that the “rhetoric of the Japanese state remains one of a homogeneous national identity” (Martinez, 1998: 2). Like Creighton, Martinez amplifies the notion that it may now be more relevant to understand pluralism amongst Japan’s many people rather than the unitary forces put into circulation by the nation and world beyond (see also Gerow’s 2001 examination of Japanese film). But this project seems to be pitched against the pervasive homogeneous designs of the state that create the illusion of sameness. Thus we are not sure whether “the reality” of a popular cultured or plural Japan can win out over “the myth” of a one-cultured state-sponsored Japanese race (see also Oblas, 1995; Valentine, 1998).

Other works too reflect this impasse and a motivation to push beyond it, not just in terms of understanding the plural diverse reality of Japanese society, but also in relation to a need for outside researchers to pay attention to and represent that

diversity (c.f. Littlewood, 1996). In Sugimoto's (1997) *Introduction to Japanese Society*, for example, we are told that "on balance, a majority of Japan specialists, be they culturologists or institutionalists, have tended to underscore the unique features of Japanese society..." (pp.17). Even when this is not the case and researchers are conducting objective studies into the possibility of a heterogeneous Japan, the Japanese themselves are often seen to be far behind the observers (see Befu, 1992, 2000, 2001). Writing on the topic of internationalisation, here is Sugiyama,

In asking others to understand Japanese lifestyles and values, the Japanese must also recognise those of others and strive continuously to ensure harmonious coexistence. Will the Japanese be able to display the level of tolerance that such a situation demands? Will they be able to adopt a more international outlook and orientation? Will they be able to overcome their traits of isolationism and ethnocentrism?

(1992; 100)

It is perhaps not difficult to trace the roots of this pessimism about Japan 'opening-up'. Since "Japanese social structure" had been placed initially under the social science microscope, it has been forged into rather exotic cocktails of psychological and sociological uniqueness and isolationism. Here are three quotations which reach back to the foundations of "encountering" and "deciphering" the Japanese as unique.

The basic psychological attitude of the Japanese people is a kind of inferiority complex...they do not belong to the main ethnic groups who built the modern

system of contemporary world order...they want to live without any close relationship with unfamiliar others. (Nakano, 1995: 69)

Anyone who goes abroad for the first time is likely to be surprised by the strength of his own nationalistic feelings, but Japanese are less able than most to lose consciousness even momentarily of their national origins. (Reischauer, 1988: 396)

discussing Japanese social structure The consciousness of 'them' and 'us' is strengthened and aggravated to the point that extreme contrasts in human relations can develop in the same society, and anyone outside 'our' people ceases to be considered human. (Nakane, 1970: 20)

Many contemporary writers and researchers are working hard to represent Japan's diversity rather than its sameness (Hendry, 1995; Hane, 1982; Denoon et al., 1996 amongst various other contemporary observers). The new breed of work that is beginning to look at the break down of the imaginative social construction of Japanese homogeneity is also having an impact both inside and outside Japan on the ways in which to view Japanese society. But one still feels that more needs to be done to illustrate that the process through which these homogeneous narratives and constructs are being broken down is one enacted and propelled by the people themselves (rather than, for example, the pluralizing effect of many foreigners being represented in the media, or that the foreign observers are somehow educating the society from outside). I shall now turn to look at whether studies examining emerging generations and their

perspectives on what it is to be Japanese begin to illustrate the internal contexts of these transitions.

Camp #2 The Youth Documentation Projects

If recent studies looking to development and change in the Japanese identity have variously identified a homogeneity being slowly broken apart by the increasing fissures of cultural diversity, the literature on youth in Japan has not been as prolific and explicit as one might expect in detailing how this breakdown is being propelled and enacted generationally. Projects that attempt to capture the emerging ideas of what it may mean to be Japanese are a lot thinner on the ground than projects expounding the notion that homogeneity survives as a dominant cultural or national discourse, albeit threatened by a range of imminent forces.

Merry White's "The Material Child: Coming of Age in Japan and America" is an important exception as it puts a consideration of Japanese youth and their views and identities on Japan at its heart. White's concluding chapter entitled "big thoughts" illustrates a vital social change dynamic which also sits at the heart of this work, and other studies that look at youth identities around the world (Amit-Talai, 1995; Brake, 1987). This is that, in M.White's words,

It is the teens themselves who have, with some confusion and discomfort, come to terms with a consciousness of diversity and it is this diversity among teens themselves, in family life, buying power, sexual and interpersonal

experience, political and personal ideas – that will indeed be the basis of new thinking on the nature of Japanese society. (White 1994: 221)

Encountering diversity in the locale and then incorporating that diversity as a social template with which to interpret and belong to wider social collectives is the key point here, and one that shall be repeated often throughout this work. Such a focus, in the context of the youth of Japan is, however, largely confined to M.White's work.

Having said this, however, very recent works are emerging to support this important perspective (see Miller, 2003, Sakurai, 2003).

More prevalent in the majority of this body of literature is work that while not directly giving evidence of key incorporations of diversity and pluralism, does help us to map out a series of generational transitions in Japanese society (Greenfeld, 1994; Naka, 1977; Stronach, 1995; Martinez, 1998; McGregor, 1996 and Wardell, 1995). While I shall be focusing on these and other works throughout this thesis, it is perhaps worth mentioning here a report entitled "The Japanese Youth in Comparison with the Youth of the World". Conducted in 1993 by the rather grandly entitled Youth Affairs Administration Management and Coordination Agency (YAAMCA), this report holds some qualitative clues to the possible quantitative changes going on in the minds of young Japanese. Some pertinent examples of its findings are as follows:

In response to a question on what the respondents were proud of about Japan, 48.7% responded that it was their "historical and cultural heritage" that was most important. This could, of course, be seen to back up the notion that Japanese continue to see their culture as unique, until, that is, one sees that the percentage giving this response in

Japan is low. In fact it is by far the lowest out of seven countries (USA 61.3%, UK 56.9%, France 66.0%, Korea 70.5%, Thailand 72.6%, Russia 64.2%) that put this historical and cultural heritage category first in their rankings. Similarly, 79% of Japanese youth said they were “proud to be Japanese”, but this was the 4th lowest score out of 11 countries (France was 79.8%, Sweden 86.4%, and the USA, 91.0%). Perhaps most interestingly in terms of the degree to which younger people feel aligned to the notion of their nation state, and thus to the homogeneity idea of Japan, in response to the comment “In order to serve my own country, I wouldn’t mind sacrificing my own interests” Japan (11%) was second only to Germany (10%) in showing the lowest number of affirmative responses. In contrast 96.4% of Thais would sacrifice their own interests for their country, as would 44.7% of Koreans, 36.7% of Americans, 20.3% of British, and 19.8% of Swedes.

If this survey is anything to go by, then are significant changes going on in the construction and configuration of Japanese collective identity. And the relative lack of literature that specifically examines the changing cultural and national identities of the emerging generation of Japanese begs for a study that crosses the territories of changing imaginaries and youth subjectivities. To look at youth within the context of a pattern of generational change in the conception of cultural and national identity seems a crucial focus in mapping out the directions of the Japanese social order, and this viewpoint reflects a unitary vision of Japan’s place in the world.

*Working Towards Portrayals of Cause and Effect: This Project and its Perceived
Niche within the surrounding literature*

This work thus attempts to complement the more recent anthropological concern with documenting an increasing pluralism in the conception of what it is to be Japanese. In doing so, it aims also to bring a consideration of changing generations to the fore and to focus on youth as agents of cultural change in Japan and beyond. The explicit focus of this work is not so much to help *represent* a plural Japan to readers and students of Japanese society (although this is a vital and parallel endeavour), but rather to illustrate the degree to which *Japanese themselves* have been debunking the national narratives and myths that have often defined the collective as imagined by their elders. Of course, in this I share a concern with other writers to varying degrees, (particularly, Greenfeld, 1994; Naka, 1977; Stronach, 1995; Martinez, 1998; McGregor, 1996 and Wardell, 1995). However, I am not aware of any other English language thesis-length projects which attempt specifically to trace the changing emic conception of collective identity through the generations. So perhaps this is the best location for this work's perspective in the context of the two most relevant surrounding bodies of literature.

Overall, this particular study leaves the reader confirming the kind of conclusions that Creighton, Martinez, Gerow and M.White are advancing: that contemporary Japan is perhaps being imagined in quite different ways—as a much more diversity encompassing, *plural* framework. But I hope also to begin to direct the reader to the

possible antecedents, contexts and consequences of these transitions. As I have already noted, I will be examining the way that successive generations overcome the imaginative constraints put upon them by the state and how they improve the relative mobility for the next generation; how this process works to create new kinds of communities and new kinds of ideas about what it is to be a member of a cultural, national and global collective.

As a white British man, of course, my status as a foreigner in the society would almost certainly reveal any shifting faultlines of cultural homogeneity as I became the object of people's responses and reactions to "foreignness". Was I to be constantly engaged in fighting off discrimination that could not compute my existence alongside a powerful and exclusive sense of Japanese solidarity, or was I to verify the notion that patterns of inter-generational change were allowing foreigners and other 'outsiders' to be incorporated into a dynamic and increasingly plural nationhood and/or wider collective concept?

In this introduction, I shall further set out the ethnographic, conceptual and methodological contexts of my research in Japan. I shall explain how I set about embarking on the research and how my experiences led me to take on particular approaches to interpreting Japanese society. In the ethnographic contexts section, I shall talk specifically about my own, and others' reactions to my foreignness, both because I perceived my experiences in Japan on this level as being vital to ordering my perspective on the themes I investigate, and also because the reactions help to illustrate the degree to which the structuring of Japanese identity is occurring vis-à-vis the foreign other.

Here, then, in the setting out of the (1) ethnographic, (2) conceptual and (3) methodological foundations of this work, my project is to chart the changes I identify through several stages of becoming familiar with relevant bodies of literature and sets of community relations. In the first of these sections, ethnographic contexts, for example, I feel it necessary for the reader to follow a set of important transitions that I myself went through in adapting to both Japanese life as a foreigner, and that came to form particular perspectives which I employ in the thesis. This first section is, then, both a personal and reflexive account, but I hope this will help the reader to understand how I came to develop the perspectives and concepts used within, as well as to become familiar with the settings and experiences, and the surrounding literature, that formed the approach to understanding the transitions I have set out to document. I shall return in the Conceptual Contexts section to consider again some of the pertinent literature that came to influence, form and reflect the transitions. In the Methodological Contexts I will outline my approach to the gathering of the ethnography, and examine the advantages and disadvantages of fieldwork that became multi-sited.

1. Ethnographic Contexts—

The scholarship I had received to do research in Japan included initial housing in what was called an “international house”, a block of small self-catering bedsits about twenty minutes by train from central Tokyo’s Shinjuku station. It was from this base that I set out to attempt to build for myself a social circle of Japanese youth, who could begin to inform me on the changing conception of Japaneseness. Fortunately, soon after my arrival I became, through a Japanese friend I had made in England who had since returned to Tokyo³, part of a small group of Tokyoites, all between 22-25 years old. This was a mixed group of young people, all with different occupations (social worker, student, bar owner, free lance translator, hotel bell boy), who welcomed me to their social circle.

Their circle, I soon found out, revolved around one romantic partnership which brought together two sets of people on both sides of that partnership. At the centre of the circle, were Hiro and Hiroko, the couple; emanating out from here were a mutual friend of theirs, Nobu, and then respective work and old school friends on either side of Hiro and Hiroko. Being Hiro’s friend, I thus found a very quick sense of place in this group, structured as it was on this partnership and affiliations to it. Whenever I was introduced to other members of the outer circle—such as Hiroko’s work mates, I was always referred to as Hiro’s friend, just as “Hiroko’s friends” were always introduced to Hiro’s outer circle as such. In this way, I found that my foreignness was

³ Hiro, through an extreme and very fortunate co-incidence happened to live only one train stop away from my international house.

neatly bypassed on most occasions, my in-group identity not really being open to challenge due to my place within what was perceived by myself and others as a particularly concrete set of ordered connections to the two people at the centre of the circle.

Together, during the six months I spent in Tokyo, this core group and various configurations of outer-circle members would visit restaurants and pubs, public exhibitions, the sights of Tokyo, and travel to other nearby country parks. We would go to concerts and live music performances, clubs and raves, to back-street drinking dens and noodle stalls. And again, throughout these months of socialising with these young Tokyoites, there was no sense that I was being marginalized because of my foreignness, that I was being used to help structure a Japanese solidarity that left me out, nor that these people harboured a cultural nationalism that affected their social relations with 'outsiders'.

My foreignness thus seemed incidental to my membership here, seldom noticed and rarely commented upon. Very occasionally, however, during that first six-month stay in Tokyo, my differences would be challenged and commented upon by 'outsiders' to our social set. This occasionally occurred when I would be introduced to a friend of one of the members of our group—someone from 'outside' the inner (and most often even outer) circle. Here, and again only occasionally, this other person would be confounded by my foreignness, making a series of stereotypical comments on my features or behaviour which attempted to rally the other "Japanese" into solidarity, and challenge my place in the group: "Aren't foreigners' faces small!" or "Only a foreigner would ask that kind of question!" Despite their relative infrequency, I

remember quite clearly after these interchanges, how I would suddenly feel that that the group I had joined must not be the “real Japan”, that I had not managed to infiltrate the society yet; that those rare glimpses of cultural determinism did in fact represent *the majority*, and that I was an inexperienced and naïve researcher to assume otherwise.

Despite my relative comfort and sense of place in the social circle of my Tokyo friends, my year of reading and preparation had left me with a conviction that an insidious cultural nationalism and sense of cultural homogeneity lurked behind the scenes of society, and I had merely to look for it to find it. This confused my own sense of identity, making me feel utterly conspicuous in public, an “outsider” or “*gaijin*”, and completely at ease and in the private in-group sphere, where who I was as a person seem to be reaffirmed and validated. This sense of validation and cultural anonymity *within*, and exposure, alienation and conspicuousness *without* gained some pace during those first six months and it perhaps reached a peak during my fourth or fifth month when I remember passing through a phase of being glad if it was raining so that an umbrella could be held down over my face while I walked, disguising my Caucasian features and rendering me anonymous. I would feel as if my transits from one zone of cultural acceptance to another were occurring across minefields that sought the destruction of my very self.

Again, despite this sense of alienation in the public sphere, in the inner-workings of my social group I was gradually gaining confidence as a member of a young Japanese social set. My language ability was improving and I was beginning to discover and discern a range of junctures around which young affluent and fashionable Japanese

social life occurred: I was familiarising myself with popular music and television, relative understanding and experience of other generations, classes, Asian countries and the world beyond. Interestingly, what I began to observe here was that there was a certain status to be derived from being well-travelled, and particularly, for not merely travelling but also for making local connections and friendships with people from neighbouring countries⁴. On the surface, at least, it seemed that this group of Tokyoites and the social networks that surrounded them were keying into a set of cultural narratives and identifications that were at odds with situating Japaneseness in homogeneity and sameness. Indeed, there seemed to be a concern to buck such a trend—to find a sense of present generational contemporary place in direct contrast and opposition to a walled-off Japan.

It was in this phase of my adaptation to life in Tokyo that I met Jun, at that time a post-graduate student at Tokyo University. Jun became, like my other friends, a person with whom I shared an inner connected world away from an impending sense of wider social alienation—a “safe” zone. Jun and I shared a postgraduate student sense of solidarity; we were passionate about our subjects (his was education) and about enjoying life in Tokyo. We would often talk in the early hours over a good amount of whatever we happened to be drinking. It was during such conversations that Jun would often remark—in response to my ramblings about my paradox of sensing an ‘inclusive’ and ‘exclusive’ Japan simultaneously—that I ought to go and do research in the countryside; that was where I would find the answers I was looking for, not here in Tokyo where there was already so much diversity and complexity surrounding the idea of Japan.

⁴ This was particularly observable with reference to travel to other Asian countries. I had observed various conversations between members of this circle and ‘outer’ circles too, that celebrated friendships made with ‘locals’ from Korea to Indonesia. This is further exemplified in Part Three.

I had thought about leaving Tokyo for the countryside when I was applying for money and planning my Japanese research. And Jun's insistence that participant observation in his hometown of Amatetsu on the island of Kyushu would yield good results convinced me. Having spent six months in the capital, it was a good time to leave Tokyo. I had had the valuable experience of building up a sense of what it was to be a member of Japan's youth culture in its capital city, and these experiences and the sense of membership they imparted and the confidence they gave me were to prove essential in the later stages of my fieldwork. It was time, however, to step further into the society, into a mix of intergenerational, local community and family settings. My six months as part of a group of autonomous peer-group Tokyoites was drawing to a close; I was about to enter a world of closely guarded reputations, power struggles and social sanctions. It turned out to be an utterly necessary step for me to understand the roots of the diverse youth community I had found in the capital, and would come to find again in Kyushu many months later.

Kyushu

Kyushu is the southernmost of Japan's main islands. It is approximately the same size as Wales. It has two large industrial cities in the north, Kitakyushu and Fukuoka, the port of Nagasaki on the west coast, and the volcano-framed city of Kagoshima in the south. Amatetsu, where Jun's parents lived, was situated in the middle of the island, towards the north, approximately one hour from Fukuoka city (see map).

Jun and I flew from Tokyo to Fukuoka, a 70-minute flight that landed us in the capital city of the prefecture by the same name. Jun and I then travelled some 40 minutes by train south towards the centre of the island. Here, at the mid-sized town of Tosu we waited for a bus that would take us to Amatetsu. To me, it already felt like I had arrived in a different country. The quietness of the bus station, the lack of traffic and the smell of cool fresh air were in stark contrast to Tokyo, as were the relatively dishevelled (in comparison to Tokyo's inhabitants) strangers also waiting for the bus. In due course the bus arrived and we boarded on that dark but temperate April evening, heading off to a relative wilderness, the journey remarkable in its revelation of the night scenery's vast emptiness.

So it was that we both arrived in the town of Amatetsu on the last bus from Fukuoka that spring evening of 1998. Amatetsu was to me then, quite literally, the end of the line. It couldn't have felt more alien from Tokyo. One only had to step a few paces from the main road that ran through the town to be next to rice fields that stretched for many miles towards the mountains to the north and south, although, as it happened, I would not understand the geography of the area for quite some time. I would find out later that to the north lay a mountain ridge that stretched as far as Kitakyushu city and within which lay beautiful ancient villages and shrines. I would discover that Amatetsu sat just to the north of the broad Chikugo River which carved its way through the centre of a huge valley, enclosed by the Oita Mountains to the south. I would come to know that it had a town population of around 10,000 with around 20,000 in the surrounding smaller villages and towns. I would also find out that Amatetsu was fast expanding on the edges of its borders, away from the old town, near the entrance to the highway. I would come to know this valley and its mountains

very well over the next three years, but not before I had been initiated into country life in Amatetsu itself.

Jun's parents

Jun and I took a taxi from the bus terminus to his parents' house, where we were first greeted without great enthusiasm by his mother, a woman of short stature and hard-worn expression, who showed us into a large *tatami* mat room which we were to share. As we were unloading our luggage in this room, Jun's father appeared at the doorway apparently to greet his son (whom he hadn't set eyes on for a year or more), and his foreign friend who was looking for assistance in setting up in the town. After an awkward silence during which Mr. Hirata stood firmly in the doorway, I decided to offer a word of thanks for allowing me to stay at his home. His demeanour made me nervous, and unused to such formal encounters (and unused also fluently to speaking a more formal Japanese) I hesitated. Finally, instead of saying something appropriate such as "It's very kind of you to have me and to offer your help in finding me somewhere to live for my research", all that came out was "thank you very much" accompanied by a rather pathetic foreigner's bow. At this the father left the threshold of the room without a word.

During dinner at Jun's parents' house later that night I was relieved to find that Jun's father was not quite as daunting as he had first appeared to be. However, there were social and behavioural codes at work here that made me feel as if I had moved to another culture altogether. Jun's father spoke in a heavily regionally accented guttural drawl and commanded his family around as if they were some sort of entourage.

Jun's mother appeared to be very subservient, and was ordered by her husband to fetch various items: cigarettes, beer, sesame seeds for the rice, all of which she did immediately and without complaint. Despite this apparent subservience, I would find out many months later that she held considerable sway over family decision-making and the spending of the family's fortune.

Jun's father was a self-made man, and over dinner he told me how he had made his money through leaving his former company (where he had been a 'salaryman' for many years) and starting up on his own, doing things 'his' way. He had created his own logistics firm that had gone on to be very successful. The success had left him flushed with pride and generous in gesture and conversation. He informed me of the price of most things around his house, including his car, to Jun's intense embarrassment ("Dad, you don't need to tell him how much everything *costs*!") Mr. Hirata also enjoyed shocking me with tit-bits of information on Amatetsu. I was informed that the last town mayor of Amatetsu had been involved in a gang-related murder and had actually served time in prison--he had tattoos all over his back from a spell in the inner circle of one of the local *yakuza* gangs.

As well as Mr. Hirata's interest in filling me in on the seedy side of Amatetsu's political and business elite (a world where as a very wealthy man he had his place), he also seemed concerned that he and I could establish a relationship above and beyond our respective races and nations. At least, that is how I began to interpret the anecdotes he related to me which clearly re-affirmed and laughed at typical stereotypes of "the Japanese". In particular, I was told, not for the only time over

those 3 years, a very amusing anecdote that related to an experience he had while visiting Vancouver in Canada. It went as follows:

I went into this toilet and the first thing I noticed were just how tall everyone one was! I mean these Canadian guys were huge real cowboys, like you see in the movies. And everything else was built for the abnormal height of these people. Like even the urinals! So you would go and try and pee and you felt like you were a boy in an adult world. You know, like I couldn't reach-- anyway, so I would have to stand back and try and aim upwards and create an arc!! And that's not the worst of it—because when I realised that the arc idea might not work so well after all, I went into a cubicle to sit down. You wouldn't fucking believe it—when I did my feet left the ground and swung as I sat there cracking up at the crazy world of these giants!

I found such anecdotes extremely funny and my laughter prompted this one to be told twice more that evening. But underneath the humour, I felt that these stories served a larger purpose than merely to invoke laughter. I felt that they were attempts to involve me in the rich world of a “Japanese reacting to foreignness”—ensuring that I didn't perceive “the Japanese” from the “outside”; that I could, rather, be taught to identify and laugh along with the ‘inside’, real-world experiences (Mr. Hirata was not, in fact, particularly short). In this, I got the sense of Mr. Hirata's sophisticated ability to manipulate perceived worldviews and ideas—to turn them on their head and laugh them out of existence—an ability to detect and counter the potential dehumanising gaze of others through humour. But underlying these subtle and admirable abilities, I sensed also self-consciousness: perhaps on the nature of the divide between Japanese and others? I would find out days later that Mr. Hirata was keen on literature which

delved into “what is was to be Japanese”, *nihonjinron*, a literary theme which observers of Japanese society have associated with everything from innocent ethnocentric soul-searching (Clammer, 1997) to inciting a resurgent cultural nationalism (Befu, 2000).

Mr Hirata's world

Slowly, over that first evening, I developed an impression of the world as seen by Mr. Hirata, an impression that would only grow stronger over the next few years, backed up and strengthened by subsequent events and observations. It was of no small significance, I felt, then and now, that as well as concerning himself (albeit good heartedly) in dismantling a perceived foreign ‘gaze’, his local world was also characterised by an underlying suspicion of the motives and gaze of others, and with much more intense and negative results.

I was to see this later that evening when one of Mr. Hirata's client company's associates arrived after dinner to meet us. Jun and I were informed that this was Mr. Seijou. Seijou, as I came to know him, was an intense, amusing, and highly-strung character, with a child-like sensitivity and humour that blended with a powerful people-oriented common sense and intelligence. He was a salesman in his early forties for a local construction company that built houses for the increasingly rich farmers of the area. Land prices were on the up and developers of out-of-town shopping centres were moving in. But, as I found out months later, even the excessive ‘temple-building’ of the subsidised farmers couldn't support the

construction company—*Otsubou-gumi*'s— slow but steady decline into post-bubble recession. *Otsubou-gumi* and its 15 or so employees thus owed their continuing existence to Mr. Hirata's logistics success, and the warehouses and premises that they were commissioned to build for him.

And so it was that Seijou appeared to be under the complete command of Mr. Hirata, so much so that both Jun and I (lest one think this a common Japanese relationship) were visibly shocked by the way that Seijou responded to Mr. Hirata, and at the way he was spoken to:

Hirata: Now look here Seijou, these boys need to see a bit of the town, take 'em to that new place—Chidori.

Seijou: Yes, sir. (*bows head*)

Hirata: And watch it you don't drink too much and drive 'em back. Put them in a taxi—you hear me! I know what you're like! Driving that van thing all over town after a shit load of *shouchu*!

Seijou: Yes, sir, no problem at all. (*bows head*)

Hirata: And remember that next week I want you to drive us all down to Mount Aso for some sightseeing!

Seijou: Yes, of course, sir. I'm sure these two bright young, intelligent gentlemen would enjoy a day out like that sir, yes. Like your good self, your son seems someone who would appreciate the outdoors very much. And for your distinguished guest, I am sure the scenery there will be to his liking.

Hirata: Yes, well, just make sure you're here on time! We said 8 am right?!

Seijou: 8 am sir, that's correct, yes, on-the-button sir, no need to worry about a thing.

Such exchanges (and there were several much more peremptory than this) gave the impression to outsiders that Hirata and Seijou were in some kind of underworld, where the codes for interaction and hierarchy were dramatically different from those in the "real" or "mainstream" society. The relationship between Seijou and Mr. Hirata left Jun and I flummoxed. To us both, for we talked about it later, it was as if we had entered a parallel Japan to the one we had been living in Tokyo, an alternate Japan with alternate values and relations.

It took me a long time to understand whether these modes of behaviour and hierarchical structures were particular to Hirata's world, to remnants of past cultural and personal role models in this rural society, or to class-specific templates for interaction in Japan more generally. I concluded eventually that they were a well-balanced blend of all three. Hirata's constant need to humiliate others and to command, to assert his status and to perceive himself as "above" the goings on of those around him was, in part, a need to role-play the status level he had acquired: there was certainly was a cultural 'script' in this community which he could follow to

achieve this. However, not all those with high status in this community chose this particular script, as I came to discover much later. There were scripts that stressed quiet detachment, or more commonly, self-assurance and generosity in creating an aura of high status. So in part, Hirata's behaviour was a reflection of the way he actually perceived the world around him. Over those three years in Amatetsu, I would see how Mr. Hirata saw his world as untrustworthy in many ways, a world that should be approached with the same brutal inhumanity through which it had come into existence—through short, brash spurts of aggression which 'got the job done'.

In retrospect, it is perhaps not at all surprising that Mr. Hirata saw the world in this way. His own family laboured under the hardship that circumstance can levy on social lives. In time I would hear that Jun's mother had contracted cervical cancer (a condition from which she had since recovered) while "serving" under her mother-in-law. On hearing that her daughter-in-law had contracted what at the time had been diagnosed as a terminal disease, this old lady had simply stated "serves her right for being so lazy around the house all these years." It was anecdotal evidence such as this that began to map out the contexts of Mr. Hirata's approach to life, and that made his humour all that more precious and enchanting, his occasional sensitivity all that more remarkable.

Mr. Hirata's moments of sensitivity—occasions when he would let slip that his wife was so wonderful to put up with him and that he was so grateful that she had decided not to leave him—that hinted at a need to find sanctuary away from the stresses of his job and the relations he felt pressured to 'perform' within. In the deeper recesses of his mind it seemed there was an understanding that in certain circumstances, and

certain contexts, people might not approach life in such a cynical and inhuman way.

It was not clear to me then whether he perceived himself to be representative of a particular class; whether or not he had considered the connection between economic hardship and the resulting social values and worldviews he had taken on. Was he, for instance, aware that in other walks of Japanese life there were different social norms and codes that resulted in different worldviews; families, like those depicted by the aristocratic Akio Morita (co-founder of Sony corp.) that were loving and in touch with each other's feelings, needs and desires, and who saw the world as open and freely accessible (Morita, 1987)?

I was to conclude some years later that Hirata had not much sense of a class identity. The hardness he had witnessed and endured was contextualised in more random terms than the formalised structure which class gives to the explanation of human circumstance. Hirata saw that he had made the most of his 'randomly' given circumstances. His character, like his relative fortune, was a self-made strategy, an approach for coping with the circumstances and social relations that had presented themselves throughout his 60 years of hard, socially-sanctioned rural life. Indeed, his rise to high status now, and the degree of brashness he brought to his dealings with others, seemed to represent more of a frustrated backlash at a life that had sought to restrain and sanction his potential; that he should now work to restrain and sanction the lives of others was to him an appropriate response to his achieved position on the other side of the processes imposed upon him.

Constructing Japaneseness

If there was a zone to which Mr. Hirata retreated, a world far removed from the one in which he seemed forced to respond to with suspicion, it was that of the Ochidas. The Ochidas were a couple in their late seventies who (still) farmed a plot of land on the outskirts of town. They were, in stark contrast to Mr. Hirata's business associates, an unassuming and good humoured couple who, although perhaps slightly amused that such a wealthy and well connected man should pay them so much attention, took openly to the project of providing him with a farmer's antidote to a cut-throat businessman's existence. In the comparative peace of the Ochida's home amongst Amatestu's many paddy fields, Hirata would sit and talk about the cutting and cultivation of corn, and connect and align himself with an agriculturally orientated existence, far removed, in its dealings with 'the land' and 'nature', from the business world with which he was so familiar.

It was in this agricultural hinterland that Hirata found not only his shelter from the stresses and strains of Amatestu's business elite, but, interestingly, in which he also found the ingredients for the making of his sense of Japaneseness. It was this kind of life, he would often remark to me, which was the bedrock of Japaneseness; everything else—the world of business, of competitiveness—was of another separate, modern, world. The true Japanese spirit lay in simplicity and a natural environment and was about the cultivation of crops and relationships. Too many people had forgotten the roots of their Japaneseness, had been 'polluted' by the modern world to be 'out for themselves' or 'not in touch with themselves or each other'. There was a need for people to return to a way of life that reflected their Japanese spirit, but this would probably never happen, not as long as there was no reflection of the values that were

important: simplicity and communal harmony—values derived from an agricultural way of life.

The combination of Mr. Hirata's views, actions and beliefs allowed him to become my first informant on the local roots of collective identity—it was he who started me thinking about the importance of local context in the structuring of collective identities and worldviews—the importance of local familial and community structures in understanding how people end up thinking about who they are as part of wider cultures and nations. His personal experiences, upbringing, circumstances, and the corresponding ideas he had about his sense of what it was (and was not) to be 'Japanese', helped me to explore the development of cultural and national identity within the familial and individual contexts in which it became manifest. It was Hirata, also, who began to encourage the emergence of what came to be a central theme in my research—a focus on the respective ability or access people had to see and imagine the world in various ways—a relative 'intellectual' mobility.

So much did all the ingredients that made up Hirata's world speak to the theme of mobility—his early life defined by a lack of options in terms of fulfilling his potential, as well as being constrained through the social sanctions of his community—that mobility now appeared as a vital concept to explore, given that it seemed to me that it was these contexts which directly influenced his current worldview, and helped to define his sense of locating himself within a 'vanishing' sense of what is was to be Japanese. In looking at the conceptual contexts of the thesis, I shall return to talk about mobility specifically, but suffice it to say now that it was my fortunate initial position as confidant to Hirata's local journeys—the local paths to understanding

himself as an individual within his familial and community settings—that encouraged me to begin to focus on the influence these local worlds had on the imagining of cultural and national collectives.

It began to occur to me how essential this move to the country was. While life in Tokyo had acclimatised me to living in Japan, it didn't embed me in any social systems outside the political organisations of the university where I took my Japanese classes, that informal peer-group of Japanese friends I made, nor in any intimate Japanese family lives outside the one to whose children I had taught English once a week. Tokyo had been a chance for me to orientate myself to the external facets of the society around me, and to feel part of a youth group just under the fabric of the culture in which I found myself. But what my life in Kyushu did was much more profound; it moved me to alter the way I saw the world, and penetrated an inner core of taken-for-granted cultural understandings and values that I had constructed in my life.

Already that self-consciousness and public persona of “alien” that I felt in Tokyo, was beginning to give way to more complex and multiple avenues for my own reinvention. My identity went haywire as I tried to interact with this world, as Englishman, white man, middle-class, new man, traditionalist, modernist, young person, non-Japanese, anthropologist, and, of course, Mr. Hirata's surrogate son. This latter identity became the most immediately pervasive, as it was through Mr. Hirata's connections and generosity that I was able to begin my life and work in Amatetsu. Seijou was soon assigned as my fieldwork “assistant” by Mr. Hirata, and would come to take me around a variety of farmers' homes to talk to and interview a wide range of people

from the town. It was through Mr. Hirata and my 'assistant' Seijou, that I came to participate in many community activities. These included local festivals bringing the various *kumi* (smaller groups of households) together through the production and parading of floats around the town, funerals, ceremonies blessing land that was to be built on by homeowners or businesses, rituals involving local priests well-wishing local businesses and various other gatherings that I document within.

Integrating into the Amatetsu Community

My close initial association with Mr. Hirata, while giving me an unprecedented and immediate access to the community, did bring with it difficulties, however, of which my perceived place in the community and the effects that had on how people treated me (as well as on my own sense of identity in the community) were two. Due to his status and rather difficult and temperamental character, Mr. Hirata was feared all over town by many different people, not least the people he hired to do various jobs for his company. My association with him—many people seemed to see me as his surrogate son—thus made me not the white foreigner in the community, or the non-Japanese, but the Hirata golden boy, an identity that pleased me in some ways (I was far less conscious of racial difference, and this was a considerable relief), but in others of course, restricted my ability to extract information from certain informants (particularly *Otsubou-gumi* employees), and created for me a pre-defined role and persona in the community.

What came to be my biggest frustration in that first year or so of my life in Amatetsu, despite the rich and valuable access I had to the inner workings of the community,

was the fact that I was unable to create any alternative communities or social sets, so much did I become entangled in the social relations of Mr. Hirata's orbit. The intensity of my involvement in this community became thus a total immersion in rural and predominantly middle-aged (and/or elderly) Japanese 'working class' life. I would often go for months at a time without hearing (or attempting to speak) anything else but the local dialects, and without the company of anyone of my own age, generation, or multi-sited experience—Jun had returned to Tokyo within a few days of my first dinner with the Hiratas. This was not unusual of course for traditional anthropological fieldwork in small scale societies, but was less common perhaps in a complex and relatively diverse society such as Japan.

The level of this immersion meant that within months I became part of a group of intimate social settings where, importantly, what I did, how I behaved and the attitudes I held had immediate implications and consequences on those around me and my quality of life and relationships. On the occasions where I would try to direct the ordering of these relations—such as when I attempted to host a party at my house bringing the many people I had got to know over the first few months together—there would be some kind of social clash, usually to do with people of different social statuses not being able to gather socially in the same place for an open occasion (such as a party).

Attempts to provide my own culturally learnt or personality-driven approaches to dealing with and interacting within these social relations soon had to be subordinated to the established social norms and codes that dictated order in this community. In this, I went through a period of rather intense adult socialisation, which re-aligned me

away from acting under my own impulses, to considering first what would be the 'correct' or 'socially acceptable' line or direction to take in any given context. It was the ability to incorporate this diverse new range of motivations, intentions and identities on the one hand, and the inability to put *myself* into any of the making or shaping of the social structures around me, which characterised my initial frustrations, and process of socialisation, in Amatetsu.

Amatetsu soon came to represent an intense exposure to the most involving and intimate contexts, and initially the community constantly surprised me in its duality of strict social rules and the apparent ability to do and say whatever one liked in particular circumstances. When out drinking, for instance, it was quite acceptable to strip in front of one's boss while singing karaoke songs (as Seijou enjoyed doing rather too often, see also Moeran, 1985), but during the working day, forgetting to speak in the appropriate manner to one's superiors would have been tantamount to professional suicide. This was a world loaded with social sanctions, ordered by strict hierarchical codes and suffocating in its frequent exposure to emotional brutality and dehumanisation. Observing how those with status could hammer down those who were perceived as having little or none, it all seemed to me initially very harsh indeed. Yet, there was also great kindness exhibited in communities, and sets of extremely well-oiled and utterly considerate efforts were made to maintain and foster relationships.

In this world I recognised the "social preoccupation" that Lebra (1976) has made reference to—the extreme sensitivity to social interaction and relationships. I saw the 'vertical society' that ordered a company-orientated status structure and had been

observed by Nakane (1970) some decades before. And I witnessed for myself the power of in-group (or groupist, Reischauer, 1988), solidarity and the “reference other orientation” which Kuwayama (1992) sees as directing the Japanese sense of self. But despite these flags of recognition in the literature, it was perhaps the sense of feeling *common social pressure* that stood out most, and that although widely documented (from Beardsley et al., 1959, to Kondo, 1990), had not been put at the centre of any ‘theories of Japaneseness’ which I had come across at that time.

The most fundamental feature of this intangible sense of social pressure was that it seemed precariously balanced upon a common set of carefully guarded reputations and power structures. There were ‘guardians’ of the so-called communal code who were, because of their status, able to make any form of behaviour fit the narrative tenets of community membership. There were others who saw these guardians and their code making as sacrosanct, and also those who (one felt) were critical of the positions and influence of ‘authority’. Again, however, it was, by strange contrast, the intensity and potential harshness of this world, where one had to watch what one did and how one behaved, that facilitated a kind of exclusive local solidarity; a sense that we were all together in our own private, and/or communal public, *dealings with social pressure*.

This sense of pressure was most manifest in the emotional brutality and humiliation that might occur if one did not ‘follow the line’. This line and what it meant seemed entirely dependant on who was the judge and jury in a particular situation. Thus, when my then partner came to visit me from Hiroshima, she was subjected to an emotional bombardment by Seijou, who while otherwise low ranking in the

community, held power over other outsiders, and could 'pull rank' and act as a community 'gatekeeper'. On this particular occasion, my partner was attacked (by Seijou and his sister) for not "being good enough" to and for me, for not showing the correct amount of commitment to supporting my time in Amatetsu and making my life easy (she would visit only once a month or so). After the ordeal, my partner was very upset and the attack affected her behaviour in the community for many months afterwards, making her much more subservient and deferential than she had been previously.

For the community members as a whole, it was the feeling that anyone within the community could be subjected to such out-ranking humiliation that created the sense of social pressure to conform; although, as I say, one was never sure what one was confirming to as the judges had the ability to interpret any given behaviour in a variety of ways. Often, interchanges which on the surface were about realigning people to act in the correct or proper way seemed actually to be about the organisation of relative power and place. Ironically, as I came to realise many months later, such interchanges which my then partner experienced were about initiation into a community subjectivity that put the fear of social humiliation at its centre.

Becoming a 'local'

Adapting to life, and going through an intensive socialisation in the Amatetsu community meant that after 18 months or so, I felt integrated within the relationships around me: my thoughts, feelings and attitudes began to reflect my cultural milieu

completely. My day-to-day life involved up to five visits to various locations: family homes, Hirata's business offices, Seijou's business offices and on-site locations of interest to the community such as building sites, or local ceremonies of one sort or another. My evenings were a chain of following the after-work, communal family, or communal community social sessions. I would either find myself in a local drinking/eating den with construction workers, local hostess bars (or 'snacks') with the bosses, family homes around the dinner table, or restaurants with members of the local hamlet community. By this time my status as foreigner, although of course still commented upon when I met new people, had been replaced by a profile far more configured to my individual character as seen by those around me. (I was seen as a sensitive good-natured young man who had the predictable tendencies to drink heavily and admire attractive women!). In this I felt I had become integral to the community, especially as I saw the development of such individual character 'profiles' to be the grist of interaction for other much more established figures.

As the boundaries of this world further broadened and the odd foreign English teacher or Japanese outsider would enter it, I began, in the company of members of "my community", to play out the persona of one held by the invisible social bonds of 'society' and 'community', but given an individual sense of freedom, knowing that that solidarity was shared with others subject to the same pressures. In response to 'outsiders' I quite naturally took on a local "Japanese cultural identity". In time this became so entrenched that I began to act out this persona when in the company of all 'outside' Japanese and foreigners. I would play the line—again quite naturally and without forethought—of a Japanese encountering foreigners living or visiting Japan. I would explore and comment on the newcomers' different-ness and help to point out

the Japanese-specific thoughts and approaches to whatever we spoke about. And, what's more, the other Japanese around me slowly permitted me, throughout this process, to play the role of “native”—albeit with special “liaison” qualities.

I now perceive that *me* as a person attempting to gather up the threads of social solidarity. I sought to tap into a common sense of *dealing with the feeling of social pressure*, and to use that commonality as a powerful identifier of group membership and place. In retrospect, it was a powerful force—to feel part of a group of people that through countless conversations with one another had shared their individual adaptations to a world commonly perceived as exerting social pressure. In my dealings with ‘outsiders’, foreigners and otherwise, I thus felt only able to represent myself as a member of this commune, a self-conscious prisoner amongst other similar prisoners who was ‘allowed’ to be conversing with someone from the ‘outside’.

So it was that in Amatetsu I began to experience what I felt became a central focal point around which that local Japanese social life revolved. This was a place of tension between what “the society” (*seken*) deemed to be the appropriate mode of thought and behaviour, and the root of the individual's desires (*jibun*) to lead a life free of society's constraints. And it was at the point where these two elements collided that the interactive and imaginative contexts for social life were set out, providing the raw material from which a powerful sense of community membership was invoked and made real.

Initially, when I had first arrived in Amatetsu, I had thought the divisions framed in terms of me being “a foreigner” and of society being “Japanese” were representative

of a world closed off from the non-Japanese. This too seemed the focus of much of the literature (c.f. Kuwayama, 1992; Sugiyama, 1992). However, as I became more and more immersed in the intimate lives of those around me, I realised that the struggle to maintain closeness to the 'centre' and prevent myself from marginalization was not merely my own. All the others were negotiating place vis-à-vis the perceived central markers of the community, attempting to lessen the chances that they themselves were set apart from the 'pack'. There was no central core of 'in-group', merely the illusion of one that emanated from those determined (and given leave through their power and status) to judge, sanction, and set out codes and rules for others. This left an ironic and paradoxical precedent for group membership: that one *felt* membership through the threat of being marginalized as a non-member.

This became for me a crucial observation. If marginalization through difference was a key way to order community relations *within* this community, then it was hardly significant (in terms of change in the national or cultural identity) that it was occurring to mark out the foreign other, (c.f. Valentine, 1998). This, then, perhaps was not so much a reflection on "the Japanese character" as it was on the ways in which people had learnt and experienced community relations in this locale. Indeed, I myself had taken to commenting on the differences between foreigners and Japanese. And this was not because I was 'racist', 'groupist', 'conformist', or even 'Japanese', it was because I had become conditioned to be part of a local collective that required of me all my social capital, and left me none to include or join other groups in the world I perceived as operating all around me.

Again, these experiences and observations powerfully shaped the way I began to interpret social life and its interplay with social identity. I began to see that it is the local community that shapes our approach and sense of place amongst all successive collectives—how in our locales we develop ‘templates’ for understanding ourselves in the wider world. It felt to me much later almost as if I had stepped into the skin of the classic “Japanese” type that many previous researchers had made reference to—walked around behind the social structures to see what propped them up. And what I had found was not “Japanese” at work producing “Japanese” social life, but people embroiled in a paradoxically self sustaining community of sanctions and pressure which, as I came to find out, many of their children and/or grandchildren were in the process of overhauling.

At that time, however, I had no real ability to reflect upon that position; all I could do was act from within a sense of myself as part of a rather comfortable and often enjoyable ‘prison’ of social relations. And perhaps it was because of the intensity of this immersed state that I began to feel a need for ‘escape’. It was not because this world did not provide for me a powerful expression of my newly configured and expressed ‘personality’, and give me a whole community in which to negotiate my personal identity with and against the collective, but because somewhere in my mind the youth community identity I had formed in Tokyo lived on, and I needed, I reminded myself, to continue to track the development and causes of its emergence, so that I could return to understand the roots of the social transitions I was witnessing and attempting to document.

As I increasingly felt the pressure and push of “society” on me, so I began more and more to perceive that the world of younger people was not a part of this powerful solidarity, the young were separate from the goings-on of this hyper-controlled and hyper-sanctioned world. My brief encounters with the sons and daughters (and sometimes grandsons and granddaughters) of my community peers were often characterised by a powerful sense of youth solidarity, and to those that had heard of this foreigner living the life of their elders, a muted but detectable respect that I should be able to cope in this world. There was also, I later reflected, a deeper sense that these young people had two worlds—the community of their parents, and one or more of their own making. After 18 months or so in Kyushu, I was only just emerging from the haze of my initial Hirata-led immersion, as if awaking from a dream when I suddenly remembered that my research plan was to look at youth generations! To do so now would require expanding my research networks out to nearby towns and connecting with a variety of groups. There were of course young people in Amatetsu but there weren't enough to support a “native” youth community immediately available for exploration.

Time travel—from past tradition to present rendition

As I branched out and took trips to the nearby cities of Kurume and Fukuoka, I gradually found that the young people I met, interviewed and often befriended were people who had never been much affected by the constraints of more traditional Japanese family or community life. Unlike their parents and grandparents from Amatetsu, many of the young people I came across were not even responding to a world they perceived as exerting control. They were so far removed from such a

world that even my concerns as someone seeking escape from its constraints were not readily understood. In my exposure to a world of social sanctioning and careful social negotiation I had seen a side of Japanese life that aligned me more with the parents and grandparents of young Japanese than it pushed me into the world they experienced.

The degree to which I had adjusted to the faultlines and conditions of social life in Amatetsu and made them intuitive markers for my involvement and interaction with others was marked; so much so that it initially affected my ability to begin fieldwork with young people. On one occasion it was brought home to me just how immersed I had become in the world of the Amatetsu ‘elders’:

I had that evening found myself at a bar in the nearby city of Fukuoka, and had, by extreme good fortune been introduced to two young men who happened to be from a small town just near Amatetsu. The bar I was in was a particularly trendy one, and, had I been in my Tokyo ‘frame of mind’, I would have treated them in the way that I would have treated anybody else in a cosmopolitan and diverse setting. For some reason, however, I assumed that, given that we all lived in close proximity to Amatetsu, these guys must be part of the same ‘group’ and scene I was!

Speaking in a broad Amatetsu drawl (not cool), and using an intonation, gesture and body language that sat somewhere between an elderly farmer and a forthright and rather arrogant sounding middle-aged business man, I impressed on them how ‘cool’ this bar was—how nice it was that there were so many ‘foreign’ people, and that I bet they didn’t serve *shochu* (a generally unsophisticated potato spirit drunk by country

people) behind the bar! Despite being embarrassed and un-amused by my inappropriate behaviour, these guys kindly gave me a lift back to Amatetsu later that night. On our separation, I spoke to them much like a older person in the local community would have spoken to me, with an odd mixture of reverence (I used the formal *keigo* Japanese—again not cool), and familiarity, saying something like: “So kind of you both to take me back: please do consider me a drinking partner in the future when you are next out in that big city—or stop by anytime for some *shochu*!”

Needless to say that I never heard from either of these two men again, despite leaving them a home phone number. It would be another 6 months before I was given a mobile phone by a friend who began to see the need for me to move out of what was then my social orbit. My unfortunate encounter in the bar motivated me to find alternative communities of younger people, so that I could at least relocate myself and my behaviour in the contemporary settings in which they had formed some two years before.

In so doing, I came further to discover that the youth generation seemed empowered with a diametrically opposite set of values and outlooks from their elders, and that to a large extent coming from a tradition of dealing with the ‘old’ alienated one from the ‘new’. To focus and marginalise difference as the de facto short cut to invoking instant solidarity was untenable to those with a wider experience than just that of their locales—i.e. most young people. In order to link more closely with this generation I needed to compartmentalise my initial Amatetsu experiences—to store the hard won understanding of Hirata’s world away in another cultural persona—and revert to my Tokyo *modus operandi*, so that I could interact and begin research with the youth

generation. Of course, in many ways this was a relief. The immersion in such a social-sanctioned world had been hard, and I welcomed my work's new focus, but as my Tokyo experiences would help me here, so the 'old' world and its values would come to aid me in the future. For the next 18 months or so I set about attempting to build myself a new social set, to begin to act my age (I was 24) in a culture that I was now setting about claiming as my own.

In many ways, this thesis is the story of what I found out, following that new research agenda. It is an attempt to place individuals and their communities within the streams of adaptations to increasing intergenerational mobility, to decreases in levels of social sanctioning and in the coming to terms with collective spirits and identities that emerged from these transitions—the new and renewed visions of a diverse and plural, rather than homogeneous and unitary vision of what it is to be Japanese.

Indeed, it was this sense of the plural, diversity-inclusive, as opposed to the singular, diversity exclusive, that I found to be a useful distinction to make in setting apart the worlds of the heavily sanctioned, and those of the comparatively free, communities I came across. What I found was that in comparison to the local sanctioned worlds of 'elders' in Amatetsu, one could, in other communities, freely negotiate Japanese identity in any fashion one chose. There were some restrictions, of course; one would have to feel secure in the knowledge of efforts to define the respective community that had gone before in Japanese youth and popular culture—be aware of some of the narrative tenets relating to class, generation, images of other countries etc. Luckily, my time in Tokyo gave me this sense of popular cultural membership, and it was a persona I could revert to and play out in Kyushu circles, a confidence through which I

began to enter and observe interaction and identity in these social sets. Importantly, of course, there were many Japanese young people who did not have such confidence, or access to such generational information and solidarity. They were rarely found in centres of a youth community as such, tending instead to remain in the quiet villages and hamlets of the elders.

It seemed to me at that point vital to locate this youth I was setting about to 'rediscover' in the contexts of the worlds that had gone before them, to worlds like Amateatsu. I wanted to focus not merely on youth worlds, but on the complex paths of development and change that had brought alternative communities into existence over the three generations I had had the good fortune to come to know so well.

Despite the apparent separation of the young and the old in terms of their communities, they were of course linked through their families, and there had been a rich set of transitions that had pushed their worlds apart. Indeed, in my movement away from the sanctions and controls of "community" and "conformity", I embodied the cumulative efforts of more than one generation. I came to realise just how broad my experience had already been, and how important it was to represent now the various takes that the diversity of people I had met had on their local lives, communities, and their sense of what it was to be Japanese through and between these generations.

Conceptual Contexts

In approaching the ways to frame my ethnography of communities and individuals from Tokyo to Kyushu, I needed to develop a set of conceptual contexts and approaches that would allow me ground the work in appropriate theory. Because of the nature of the topic I had now chosen to focus upon, the influence of local and familial experiences on the conception of collective identities over the generations, I needed an approach that would cover multiple ‘dynamics’. I needed to be able on the one hand to talk about how ideas of family and community had changed on the local level, and on the other, to make reference to collective identities and the narratives that underpinned them and how they too were changing.

It seemed that a perspective which examined the relative possibility for people to ‘move’ beyond certain understandings of the world towards newer or re-configured imaginative representations would be the most effective and therefore, as I have noted above, I decided that a focus on mobility and generational change would be most suitable to the theoretical contexts in focus.

Generational Change and Intellectual or Imagined Mobility

Bertaux and Thompson’s work “Between Generations” (1993) was formative in this approach, bridging as it did the notions of mobility and generational change. I refer to it often within this thesis, and particularly in part one, in order to demonstrate how we

'learn' patterns of mobility in the family, intergenerationally. In addition, the focus on generational relations looks to more recent studies on youth identities *per se*, examining (in Part Three), how a very interesting set of ideas emerging from modern literature about comparative youth culture outside Japan can shed further light on the relationship between mobility and identity across the generations. Brake's 1987 work comparing youth across various nations is fundamental here, as is the notion that youth could be a barometer to understand social change across societies. Wulff also saw this as important: "youth, their ideas and commodities move easily across national borders..." (1995; 10). As well as seeing the transnational contexts of youth she went on to note the degree of agency that youth have in changing societies. Referring to Bauman (1992), Hebdige (1979), and Mead (1970), Wulff aims to centre her collection of works around the concept of agency, a concept that again I draw much on. Lastly, Amit-Talai (1995), like Merry White, introduces a powerful model for understanding that youth encounter the "multi-cultural" in even the most local of contexts, driving them towards the integration of pluralism and diversity in their subsequent worldviews and collective identities.

While I will be dealing in more detail with these notions of generational change and mobility throughout the work, here it is perhaps useful to expand the concept of mobility in particular, as it differs from the way that term is commonly used in sociology for example. My experiences and observations of individuals, generations and communities in Japan led me, as I have said, to develop the concept of "intellectual" or "imagined" mobility as a way to understand the relative ability for people to find a sense of place in the real and conceptual communities where they experience and sense membership, or potential memberships. This sense of the

relative ability to seek out and find personal and collective place and space, I felt was pervasive in the structuring of community relations in Japan, and throughout this thesis I shall attempt to develop (both historically, and with reference to individual case studies) the notion of relative mobility as an essential element in the ordering and direction of personal and collective identities in Japan and beyond.

I shall be defining mobility, then, not just as the sociological or demographic term might suggest, as the ability of individuals physically to move from one place to another. Rather, I shall see mobility as representing the imaginative equivalent: the ‘moving-beyond’ or modification of the social, emotional, familial bonds and/or representative constructs that people develop generationally in their locales. And again, as I will go on to demonstrate in chapter one, mobility can be seen as somehow “received” or processed through inter-generational interactions (Thompson, 1993). Even more importantly, I shall be illustrating that its influence carries through our lives to order and influence our collective identities, as, again, I will argue in Part One. In this way, then, as with physical mobility, intellectual mobility can be linked to notions of class and occupation—the contexts of our lives having an impact on the extent to which our concrete or imaginative worlds are open to expansion.

Relative mobility thus speaks to our ability to feel able—feel ‘mobile’ enough to—move beyond the constructs that others build for us and around us in our families, our communities, and our wider cultural and national collectives. It is most clearly seen in the ability—or lack thereof—to move beyond sets of stereotypes and images that we feel represent ourselves and others; the narratives that we have learnt to identity with and invest in. “Movements” in intellectual or imaginative mobility are about our

wanting to feel represented in new ways, to belong to alternative entities, lifestyles, belief systems, collectives and worldviews. And, again, like physical mobility, the mobility I refer to here can occur because of a whole host of different factors: personal tragedy, small or large-scale economic change, local/global events, improved access to new communities and/or worldviews.

Mobility can also be seen to revolve around sets of power relations. It is the power to move beyond those who seek to exert pressure to conform over the individual. In our personal worlds, power imbalances may lead to us wanting to reject the views and lifestyles of our parents; in our collective worlds power imbalances may result in a desire to move beyond a particular identification of ourselves as, say, this or that *type* of Japanese. Both attempts to find movement express a core need to *seek more appropriate representation* away from those who have exerted, directly or indirectly, control over that representation. We could see, then, that the ultimate immobility is not to have access to any alternative frameworks or constructs for our personal or collective representation and/or identity. And the ultimate mobility, so to speak, is to be able to be in charge of our own representations—to be able to pick and choose from the narratives and frameworks that exist around us, or perhaps, even to create them for ourselves and others.

Essentially, the changes I chart within the thesis in Japan—particularly in regard to more ‘plural’ ways to envision the nation state—are all to do, I argue, with substantial increases in the imagined mobility of the respective Japanese generations. That is to say that I trace the degree to which subsequent Japanese generations have been able to take on for themselves adaptable representations that integrate, rather than exclude,

diversity. This is not quite the same thing as saying that particular generational cohorts of Japanese think ‘like this’ or ‘like that’, but rather to suggest a powerful underlying force of change that is ‘at work’ in altering the way that all people come to conceive themselves as members of collectives—a process that in time redefines the collectives themselves.

The easiest way to trace the ongoing access to such mobility, I argue here, is through intergenerational relations and change. The influence of our inter-generational experience and identifications is formative, both in the individual, and in what individuals set out to create and join—the collective. The junctures and disjuncture, the tectonic arrangement of narratives and categories we use to define and order our social relationships, are ever shifting and ever diversifying. New imaginative frameworks and communities emerge to compete for our representation. And it is perhaps the force of generational change that allows us to perceive some patterns of change in these arrangements, how some constructs come to be popular forms of representation in one time, and then lose legitimacy as they are superseded by others seen as more appropriate in yet another era.

To focus on mobility illustrates a more individually-orientated approach to social life than the popular writing on Japan would have us follow. In almost all the established literature on the subject of Japanese thought, identity and behaviour, the focus is on the Japanese embedded within an “Interactional Relativism” (Lebra, 1976)—a need to define self against key social others and contexts. My observations, in contrast, have accentuated the notions of self-evaluation, of a concern with using the individual self as a key point of negotiation in moving through and beyond social contexts, themes,

narratives and accepted modes of behaviour (c.f. Kondo, 1990). There is a subtle distinction here, then, between seeing the self as 'dependant' upon social others, and seeing it as negotiated 'in response' to others. It is appropriate at this point to summarize briefly how this perspective and focus on mobility offers a departure from certain past approaches to understanding Japan.

Anthropological Approaches to Understanding Japan, and the approach of this work

There have been many attempts to deconstruct Japanese society—to come to terms with some of the divides and boundaries I was coming up against in my extended period of fieldwork. Many of these are useful in portraying the methods through which social place is negotiated and found through a variety of inter-relational dynamics and concepts. Here I will review two particular conceptual distinctions that have been highlighted in much of the literature, explaining how, while they are useful in many ways in extrapolating out the underlying classification and interpretation of social life as experienced by many Japanese, I have chosen to move beyond their relevance as conceptual tools for the deconstruction of Japanese social life per se. I will explain how I prefer to see the cultural, psychological and linguistic connections that these concepts articulate as being in a state of cross-generational flux and negotiation. I will point out that in a state of deep cultural and classificatory change, it may be more appropriate to adopt an interpretative anthropology based on particular interactive contexts, rather than with reference to established culturally specific models or concepts.

Recent sociological approaches to “understanding Japanese society” have relied heavily on a set of key interpretative foundations emphasising the “interactional relativism” or “social preoccupation” (Lebra, 1976) of Japanese people and their culture. This includes Nakane’s (1970) identification of the Japanese group organisation as being based on a “situational position in a given *frame*” or *ba* (c.f. Bachnik, 1994). Such interpretive models suggest that Japanese culture, language and

psychology emphasises *the organisation of self in the contexts of a surrounding collective* (c.f. Bachnik, 1994). From this key focus emerges a variety of concepts extrapolated from the Japanese language and applied to Japanese cultural and psychological structures.

At the centre of such extrapolations are the terms *uchi* and *soto*, meaning inside and outside. For Bachnik, the terms *uchi* and *soto*, become—through what she describes as a process of social ‘indexing’—“crucial to the delineation of a “situated” social order--and a relational self” (1994: 5). Doi (1973) goes somewhat further in seeing that “insideness” and “outsideness” are key to Japanese psychological and cultural classification, and linking other complementary paired sets of terms to one notion (inside) or the other (outside), demonstrating that, for example, *ura/omote* (back/front), *giri/ninjou* (obligation to others/personal feelings), *honne/tatemae* (inner feelings/outer expression), *jibun/seken* (self/society), also relate to notions of inside and outside agency.

Reviewing how *uchi* and *soto* set the “directional co-ordinates” for all the other sets of terms and therefore can be seen as “the most fundamental”, Bachnik and Quinn’s widely read collection *Situated Meaning* (1994) also sets out to demonstrate that the terms and their derivatives can and have been used to interpret and highlight a vast array of Japanese social structures and cultural aspects. Elsewhere, these paired sets of terms have been applied to: political hierarchy (Ishida, 1984), the organisation of large and small companies (Gerlach, 1993; Hamabata, 1990; Kondo, 1990), family/household organisation (Hendry, 1995), marriage (Edwards, 1989), gender

(Rosenberger, 1992), health and illness (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1984), and religion (Hardacre, 1986), c.f. Bachnik, (1994).

The variety of ways and facets in which and to which these distinctions have been applied have helped both to emphasise the relational self dynamic that has been seen as at 'the core' of Japanese social life, and also to build and re-enforce a sociological profile of "The Japanese" as they interrelate with one another and construct their selves through what is seen as a core relational dynamic. Despite this wide ranging use of these paired terms by Japanese specialists, criticisms and limitations have been made with regard to their application, and particularly when it comes to the interpretation of their meaning in particular contexts.

Firstly, as has been pointed out already by Backnik, (1994), linguistically these markers are used (like the English 'us' and 'them') in a huge variety of ways. To use the word *uchi* doesn't *always* mean someone is engaged in defining the inside versus the outside; just as using the word *us* doesn't mean we are always trying to oust the *them*. That the words illustrate key underlying conceptual divides is certainly the case, but it seems very difficult in practice to quantify and detect whether it is the underlying concept, or merely a linguistic convenience, that has resulted in one or other of the terms being used (c.f. Quinn, 1994).

Perhaps an even greater limitation, as pointed out by Oda (2003) as well as Suke (1994) and Ikuta (1980), is that *uchi* and *soto* are conceptual dimensions that exist within and between other dimensions too. Their applicability to how an individual sees the world is only measurable when we have other information about that person

to complement the investigation. And if that is the case, why prioritise the need to concentrate on these terms specifically? Do we end up concluding that there may be too many variables at work behind the construction of worldviews and identities at the individual level to make these terms in themselves reliable social barometers in the charting of change in Japan; not least because they rely on static, one-way, relational models that tend not to provide space for individual diversity?

These limitations are already well known and documented, and during my fieldwork I became increasingly persuaded that they were significant enough to warrant the consideration of a new approach to deciding whether there is a central set of embedded cultural distinctions at all in Japanese society. More specifically, my diverse experiences in different community and generational groups during my fieldwork left me with a concern that these terms and their reliance on the model of interactional relativism may not account for departures in the way that social meaning and solidarity were being produced *in opposition or contrast* to the established conceptual classificatory methods. I was worried that adopting the conceptual frameworks that these terms set out would compromise my ability to observe change in the interrelational dynamics of different Japanese generations, to represent the diversity of ways that individuals—particularly within emerging communities and generational cohorts—see the world in Japan.

While these terms seem absolutely fundamental in marking out the distinctions with a community like Amatetsu, they seemed to be far less appropriate when applied to other types of groups or communities. For instance, the reader will note that above I refer to *jibun* (self) and *seken* (society)--terms which stress the interplay between the

internal and external in the creation of social meaning (c.f. Kuwayama, 1992)--as a fundamental social pivot in Amatetsu life. To do so helped me to map out the possible interplay between the individual and the wider society, set out a model that accentuates the mutual definition, the alterity dynamic, which underlies negotiation as an individual in the contexts of a group.

However, my experiences in the Fukuoka bar, for instance, demonstrated that social interaction based on the notion that *seken* exists can marginalise an individual from a social world constructed along alternative axis. Again, then, the main reason I choose not to enter into an interpretation of Japanese society that reaches back to its interactional relativism, is that I feel many people in Japan may be trying to move beyond such conceptual distinctions, or, as I have hoped to illustrate above, have moved beyond them unconsciously and may not even perceive them to be in existence. While it seems impossible to predict the degree that, say, a younger person will be able to ignore or avoid the pressures of *seken* or *giri* (obligation to group members) as they pass into more established positions in the social order (if indeed there will be a social order left for them to exist within, c.f. Mathews, 2003), for a significant proportion of my informants, their social world seemed unaffected or, at the very least, reconfigured away from these conceptual frameworks.

So the conceptual models that have been so pervasive in the characterisation of Japan may then only represent one kind of configuration of Japanese social life, and one that is under increasing pressure to change, as I will discuss in Part Two and Three. Again, this is not to say that the categories are not 'useful', in that they facilitate commentary and interpretation of Amatetsu community relations and identities I have already

made reference to, but in a social climate where the importance and implication of 'society' and who it includes and excludes (*uchi/soto*) itself is under intense intergenerational negotiation, the divisions may oversimplify a diverse range of understandings and patterns of change. The related notions of *jibun/seken* and *uchi/soto*, as just two examples, therefore, while purporting to represent the Japanese, may not be as useful as other kinds of markers that illustrate an individual's way of seeing the world on a case-by-case, person-by-person, or generation-by-generation basis.

These examples of the established and possible emerging limitations of two sets of conceptual terminology illustrate a broader and more profound concern that the Japan I felt I was experiencing could not be 'explained' by talking about social structures or patterns of behaviour that were 'specific to the Japanese'. Although there were 'Japanese specific' elements in all I observed—particular narratives, ways of life, status relations etc., what was more pervasive throughout the observation of change in the individual and collective identities were not these factors, but more universal notions of power, of solidarity, of social pressure and/or the lack of it, and what I came to call mobility. In addition, the recent turn towards understanding and representing Japan's plural and homogeneous society must also, I suggest, explore the possibility that the classificatory and conceptual structures that have been seen as fundamental to the society and culture may also be undergoing a similar process of diversification. Contemporary approaches to understanding Japanese society (and other societies too) must therefore, I suggest, be open to representing a plurality of ways in which the foundational classificatory premises of cultures themselves may be under intergenerational negotiation. Any such attempts should seek to illustrate that

socio-cultural change is highly dynamic on the most fundamental levels, rather than directed by established interpretations framed by coherent and stable cores.

Because of an attempt to stay focused on the elements of social life which I feel enable direct cross-cultural comparison and elucidate rather than give order to individual diversity, I do not here relate anthropological observations on Japanese informants to theories illustrating how the inside (*uchi*) and outside (*soto*) are key markers for the construction of self/identity, nor how self (*jibun*) and society (*seken*) work together to create meaningful parameters for the creation of personhood. While I take on board Bachnik's crucial observation that these terms can help us understand "important issues outside Japan" (1994: 5), as well as the fact that these terms can be seen to hold a deep relational significance, there are yet other markers, 'landmarks', or 'signposts', that I feel better represent the immediate needs of individuals to build a sense of their own place in the world.

These other markers relate to universal divisions of power, and specifically as I work to incorporate into the perspective of this work, mobility and opportunity. They are markers that are contextual to particular conversations and settings, but yet which reach back into the narrative reserves of the collective identities of Japaneseness, working-class-ness, ruralness, or whatever other solidarity is being propounded. It is these context-specific markers that I feel hold more significance while charting generational change in the conduct and conception of culture, and can be seen through analysis of their use to complement not *Japanese social life* but all social life, as it is universally improvised and brought into being (Machin et al., 1996).

In attempting to represent and reflect multiple identities and the shifting ways in which the world is perceived from multiple standpoints, I can thus be seen to follow Rapport (1997) and Cohen (1994) in attempting to go beyond theory that sees common cultural patterns of identity and selfhood. Like Rapport (1997), I wish to celebrate the diversity of individuals and to understand how they choose to connect themselves to their collectives, rather than to apply, or feel bound by a common 'rule' as to how they go about creating their 'selves' or identities. Like Cohen, (1994), I wish to understand how the individual and the group co-exist not as mirror images of one another, but as shifting grounds of social negotiation that facilitate social life in its entirety.

Where, in what is perhaps a new age of comparative culture, we compare transnational groups and identities, new broader social concepts than those that relate to *social structure per se* may be increasingly necessary. Likewise, conceptual frameworks that can explain how change infiltrates social systems and how cultural unity fractures and cultural diversity becomes instilled seem to be in demand. In this push to understand the contexts of the trans-cultural or trans-national, only dynamic multi-dimensional models where, if you push a button in one place the whole structure alters to fit that new request, can help us. The sturdy and reliable diagrams that illustrate one kind of social mapping of a people seem increasingly unable to assist in mapping socio-cultural diversification and change.

Importantly, more diversity-acknowledging, fluid, dynamic and context-specific perspectives may be necessary in order to begin to be able to make the links and connections between and across national and cultural boundaries—to be able to plot

the very transnationalism that more recent anthropology, and certainly this work, is interested in documenting. In this, can we see that anthropology has perhaps largely fulfilled its role in understanding cultural specificity? Has the discipline done its work in pointing out the areas and arenas in which we frame life in particular ways? Is its role now to pull some of these threads together, to connect the contexts with the larger patterns of culture and change that affect all societies in a world which is increasingly influenced by a multiplicity of responses, actions and identities?

The Structure of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis reflects a desire to come to terms with some of these questions and concerns. In particular, I have been keen to emphasise some central causational social 'pivots' which I see as setting out some dynamic, rather than static, social mechanics. The first and most pervasive of these, put forward in Part One, is an emphasis on the hermeneutic nature of social representation and change. Simply stated, I see that change in the way individuals experience familial local life is directly related to the way that place in collective representations is conceived. The relationship works also in reverse, so that change in the collective representation will influence the ordering and experience of local experience and structure. This key idea splits the main body of analysis into two parts: Part Two: Familial Worlds, which examines historical and contemporary change in the Japanese family and community, and Part Three: Collective Identities, which explores the representations and changing conceptions of Japanese cultural and national identity.

Parts Two and Three both open with historical analysis that sets the scene for understanding the transitions they go on to examine. These two sections of historical analysis are used in order to contextualise the ethnographic and theoretical points being raised, as well as to point out the importance of mobility in the development of local life and collective representation. The first sweep of history (Part Two) reiterates much of the (more recently) established anthropological and historical literature on the history of the Japanese family and community, while putting the key transitions within a framework of the development and course of modernity and corresponding mobility. This is done in order to explore the concurrent development of the *ie* family system, post-industrial community relations and the drive to modernise and nationalise Japanese minds by the Meiji society. This historical analysis provides a basis for understanding and charting the transitions that I later identify in the context of changing obligations to and structure of the contemporary family (Part Two, family), and generational movement away from maintaining close community relations (Part Two, community). This section also allows me to develop the notion of increasing mobility in response to historical events and processes; this conceptualisation sets up an analytical framework for Part Three. In doing so, there is one concern I should address here which relates to that aim in particular and runs through the work as a whole.

As I point out at several points in this work, I am concerned with telling the history of the majority—the agricultural people that were some 80% of the Japanese population. How agricultural people have been able to perceive the world around them, their possible opportunities to move beyond their inherited social systems and identities—this is this concern that overrides a consideration of intellectual or elite movements or

trends. This does not mean, however, that I in any way see the university protests of the 1920s, or the intellectual movements of the 30s and 40s as unimportant. Indeed, Japan has been highly diverse in its intellectual and political approaches, and many of these more diverse (small-scale) historical movements are being mirrored by today's youth on a large scale; something I point out in Part Three when I compare the 20s-born intellectual Yanagi's approaches to cultural diversity with what I see as a "default" approach to imagining Japanese cultural identity by Japan's youth today.

In Part Three, the historical analysis takes a slightly differently focus from that of Part Two. Here I am concerned with how cultural identity has been taken on as a project by a variety of powerful people and elites throughout Japanese history. This historical interpretation is designed to illustrate the extent to which mobility has traditionally been controlled and restricted by the designers of the Japanese state, and to point out that this may be slowly changing as subsequent generations have freed themselves from a variety of imaginative confines. This is a process which, through the hermeneutic circle, is linked with the familial changes I chart in Part Two.

Another point worth mentioning here is that the depictions of characters and informants who discuss historical narratives or processes in this work are intended to precisely that: depictions. I am not offering a "factual" consideration of Japanese history through the characters I present; rather I am hoping to involve the reader further in understanding the diversity of ways history is interpreted and made in order to give place, continuity and legitimacy to the making of Japanese social identity. Formal historical analysis (those two sweeps I mention above) is thus conducted away from the character case studies I present, and is aimed at providing a chronological

framework through which more contemporary social transitions can be placed and contextualized.

Lastly, identity itself is a concept that I employ heavily within this work. I devote much of Part One of the thesis to a discussion of identity as set within a developmental framework. I draw on studies that look at how narrative is formed in the family (Dunn, 1988) and comes to determine the way in which we form powerful interactive and imaginary templates which we use to situate the individual and collective self. This 'intimate' relationship between the locally formed interpersonal contexts in which we form *personal* identity, and the imaginative *collective* constructs and worldviews that we take on, sits at the centre of my understanding of the workings of identity and the self, again discussed at length in Part One, *The Intimate Culture of Identity*.

By making this explicit connection between the familial and collective self-concepts this work, then, aligns itself forcefully with Geertz (1983) in his contrasting of local detail and global structure, and with Carrithers (1996) in his use of the concrete and abstract, when defining identity as part of the mutually constructive nature of social life. And building on this central theoretical hermeneutic premise, I go on to make further categorical and conceptual distinctions that illustrate how such a dynamic operates beneath changing ideas of what it means to belong to a familial or collective group. Here, my primary concern—developing understanding of how generational change is pluralizing Japan's collective identity through an examination of familial changes over time—gives way to making a distinction between the terms *unitary* and *plural* as applied to individual and collective identities.

These distinctions are linked in my analysis to the complementary theme of mobility—of relative access to opportunity. Thus an individual who can be seen to have a *plural* outlook will accept many diverse others on an interpersonal level. (This illustrates access to imaginative mobility). And such an individual will transpose his local *plurality* to his view of the possible plural nature of his wider collective, his cultural or national identity following suit in representing the incorporation of diversity (a configuration where I apply the term *cultural pluralism*). In contrast to this, *unitary* identities (and the narratives on which they depend) will be played out within the confines of social rules and sanctions that are seen to be unalterable. (This illustrates restricted access to mobility). On an interpersonal level, individuals with a unitary self-concept may not find it easy to accept diverse others into familial or community solidarities. Likewise, this restrictive nature on the local level will find a parallel expression in the individual's collective identity, where membership may be seen to be dictated by sets of qualifiers (ethnic, racial, religious). To this last configuration I attach the term *cultural determinism* to act as a counter to *cultural pluralism*.

This key distinction between plural and unitary identities—and the relative access to mobility upon which they rest—gives way to the use of other paired terms as I move through an analysis of changing families, communities, and cultural and national collective concepts. I discuss the notion of *enclosed/exposed* community solidarities (Part Two, Community) as relating to the exclusivity and centrism of certain sets of relationships, in contrast to the open and accessible nature of others. Likewise, in Part Three, I refer back to cultural pluralism and determinism, and also make a distinction

between national identities based on *ranked power* and those on common sense of transnational *citizenship*. While the use of these paired terms may make the analysis seem over-simplistic in its mapping out of social transitions and change, I would like to point out that I employ these paired opposites not in order to accentuate the extremity of particular socio-cultural shifts, but rather to allow me to plot the direction of intergenerational concerns and movements.

These terms, and the distinctions which they make, are thus employed to help set the two worlds of personal and collective experience through a theory that links intergenerational mobility, identity, and social change. Here, in response to Jenkins' comment that "The internal and the external dance together in the unfolding of individual and collective identities" (1996: 175), I would suggest that it is the tools for tracing the very *unfolding* of these identities that must be further perfected—the technology that can follow the dance. The conceptual tools I employ in this work are thus attempts to do just this—to follow a dance of Japanese individual and collective identities over the last three generations. As I hope to show, the individual and collective identities move together in all cases and contexts, mutually defining the movements of one another, but powerfully directed by the relative mobility of each partner in the dance.

Methodological Contexts

I hope that these ethnographic and conceptual contexts have helped the reader to see how important my initial fieldwork and observations were in structuring and ordering the theoretical approaches, design, and perspectives of this work. I have not yet, however, mentioned how I approached the collection of data—the methodology I used to gather up the threads of what I observed, and the information I set out deliberately to gather in particular locations and groups.

Following the development of my perspectives on mobility, I felt that the portrayal of individual case studies was of primary importance. It was, after all, through individuals themselves that I was accessing the social trends and patterns—following the course of their own development. What else could provide for me the breath of family experiences on the one hand, and perceived national identity and worldview on the other? I thus built up a series of individual case studies over my time in Amatetsu, some of which appear in this work. Doing so involved many series of formal and informal interviews with the same person, some of which were recorded and some of which were too spontaneous to allow me directly to record them there and then.

The information I gleaned from the individual case studies often led me to want to investigate how particular processes were being played out between the generations, and here, in attempting to chart the generational divisions of local memberships and global worldviews and identities, one of my main research methodologies was to draw

on quasi-focus groups. As opposed to the stringent and formal focus-groups structures detailed by Berg, (1998) or Bryman (2001), requiring mediators or facilitators, my groups were spontaneous and ad-hoc compositions of different generations of the same family and myself. Household members would attend my home in response to a household-wide invitation for tea and “a talk about the community to help with my research”. Here we would assemble and I would make efforts to develop participant reflections on intergenerational differences in local community or wider societal life.

These ad-hoc quasi-focus groups were designed to elicit attitudes towards community membership and to gauge generational relations—as well as the knowledge that one generation had about the other—of my informants. The group sessions were taped and notes were written up on the gestures and emotional contexts of the exchanges soon after the focus sessions had finished. The same process was applied to interviews that I conducted with members of Amatetsu households, as well as to the younger people I talked to in various settings inside and outside the town. I include elements of this emotional and contextual content in some of the representations here, to provide a comprehensive picture of the respective social realities of the informants.

In addition to this structured approach to fieldwork, I also entered a mixed community of older and younger people in the later stages of my time in Kyushu, and this was a group in which, rather than actively recording the data, I merely attempted to co-exist and interact as a member of a rather eclectic group of individuals. Membership of this group in the last stages of my fieldwork helped me to bring all my observations together and consolidate my experiences through many interpersonal exchanges and

group experiences which served to expand earlier observations. In that this group provided such an integrative 'closure' to what I had spent almost four years attempting to document and understand, I chose to frame the various chapters of this thesis in a series of short novelistic-style portrayals that follow one night in the life of these people together.

Advantages and limitations of the methodological approach

The multi-sited nature of the fieldwork is well worth considering here. I was very fortunate to be able to gain such a varied experience of different social sets and communities in both Tokyo and Kyushu. As I have pointed out in the above personal account, it was that access to multiple communities that came to direct and order my approach to data collection and write-up. The advantage of this multi-sited fieldwork was that it gave me exposure to a wide range of generational groups and locations whose members provided a broad and diverse range of interpretations as to what it was to be Japanese: I hope that this has been made clear by the ethnographic contexts section, above. This range of individual and group interpretations, although complex to compile and order in my mind and research, did allow me to access diverse samples of individual case studies and collective expressions of identity that perhaps would have been more difficult to encounter had I been limited to one location. This also meant that in utilising the case study as the primary data collection and presentation methodology, I was able to represent a broader range of diverse characters from various locations; an advantage Berg (1998) sees as key to the success of the case study methodology.

Evident disadvantages and potential limitations of this experience of moving between communities and fieldwork sites are also important to consider. It should perhaps be stated here that the comparative divergence of the communities and experiences in which I moved may well have resulted in a tendency to mark-out an over-simplistic model of generational and social change. Seeing the older people's communities as exclusive and the younger people attempting to build 'inclusive' communities was representative of the communities I was experiencing, but was not, of course, representative of *all* such generational cohorts. This possible tendency to over simplify due to the compartmentalisation of my own field experience, (c.f. Hammersley, 1989), I felt needed to be tempered by some additional research design.

In order to prevent this limitation from introducing fundamental logical flaws in the theories I express within, I embarked on two counterbalancing activities. The first, as I mention above, was to join a mixed generational group in the later months of my fieldwork where I could work to integrate and test the observations I had made in the respective communities of Tokyo and Amatetsu. The second was to represent accounts that stressed that the patterns of mobility and change were not *always* to be seen plainly and simply mapped out across generational divides alone. I doubt that the combination of these concerns to counterbalance the disadvantages of the multi-sited fieldwork have been completely successful, but perhaps they have had some effect in attempting to reverse the predictable interpretative habits that came from at least two personally-involving immersions in very different social and generational circles.

There is another important and related limitation of this work. It is that I focus primarily on subjects that have made a transition to culturally relativist thought, rather than conduct detailed examinations of those people whom I found to embody culturally determinist outlooks. I have often thought after the fieldwork how useful it would have been to get detailed interviews with those people who seemed unable to imagine the foreigner as (as one informant let slip once in a description of an experience where he saw an American child slip over and cut himself) having the “same coloured blood” as Japanese. While there are accounts of intense ethnocentrism within, it would have perhaps provided a better balance to have given equal space to those with, and those without, the ability to integrate diversity into a concept of Japaneseness.

Lastly, it is perhaps worth mentioning that this project has been part of a much broader attempt to understand how collective identities which ignore or attempt to limit cultural and racial pluralism get superseded. While I have attempted to understand several transitions that I feel had contributed to a Japan-specific ‘moving-beyond’ homogeneous collective models, I feel that such understanding could and should be applied more generally, to places beyond Japan. Therefore, while this thesis is predictably an ethnographic treatment of the playing out of such processes in Japan, I would like to voice the need for perspectives which compare these trends cross-culturally and transnationally. Perhaps only with an agenda that draws on Benedict’s classic technique of contrasting cultural patterns across different societies and groups, can we answer calls like Mathew’s (2000) to develop a parallel and contemporary “Patterns of Transnational Culture”. This work can only hope to be a prelude to a project of that scope.

PART ONE

The Intimate Culture of Identity

It was usual for Kora to invite several of his friends up to his place in the mountains every few weeks or so. And an invitation was almost always accepted. It wasn't so much the setting of the place that drew us there, although the subtle lines of Japan's mountain peaks in a panoramic vista and the natural silence of the uninhabited surroundings were superb. We were drawn to the Oita-mountain cabin because somehow when gathered there people would talk freely and openly about things – about themselves. It was odd how this freedom of expression came to exist in the place – there was no religious ceremony or agreed confidences amongst those who would come. Perhaps it was that being in the spacious open-plan cabin, miles from the hubbub of everyday life, released us from the particular contexts of our lives. We became, I often thought, like writers, who, removed from the immediate reality of their experience, are given a power of analysis – an objective third-party vision – that facilitates their thoughts and expressions.

On this particular evening, Kora and I had come to the cabin ahead of the others. There were preparations to be made I had been told: water to be fetched (the cabin was a mile or so short of the mains), wood to be chopped, and a taped Japanese drama to be watched. More than two years previously Kora had decided to introduce me to some of Japan's classic television film and drama over two years previously - the education seemed to continue indefinitely.

Within a couple of hours the practical jobs had been completed, and we were relaxing with cans of cold beer in the fading evening light. The surrounding mountains were

carpeted with pine, chestnut and cedar, and the sun found its last refuge from encroaching darkness in the leaves and needles of the trees.

“It’s where the lake is now,” Kora said, gesturing to a point in the near distance.

“Funny to think that my parents’ home and much of the village now lies under a lake.

Maybe their ghosts reside there too!” he added, playfully.

I nodded, smiling, and wondered aloud about what life would have been like in such a community, in the middle of what must have then been a relatively isolated and inaccessible location.

“It was a pretty hard life for the villagers and the community,” he answered in a tone of serious reflection. “I suppose it was partly due to the economic restraints of everyday life that such communities were often unforgiving places. There was a structure – a hierarchy, as there is everywhere I suppose – that governed the way that people behaved towards one another. It was important to respect status and not to be selfish – not to fulfill one’s own wishes, but to work as part and for the community.” Kora lit a cigarette, brought it to life with a few drags and then held it between his fingers as it spilled a delicate smoke spiral into the large room.

“My father for instance. It’s not that he was cruel, exactly - although I often saw him as such - but he was a hard man. Hard to communicate with. Hard to reach.” Kora set his cigarette in the ashtray, leaving it to burn.

“He and my mother, well, they would see a value in hard work. But my mother was

softer, showed more of what she felt. For my father, being hard and inward-looking and unreachable was part of the defence he put up to the world, part of what made him able to live in a harsh environment.” Kora lifted a can of beer to his lips and took a gulp, glancing out of the large studio window into the fading mountainous landscape beyond.

“I suppose I hated him for that when I was a child. Hated him for not being reachable. But now, now that he is dead and I too am a father of forty-nine, I respect him for all that he represented, all of the hardness that he felt, which was really the bottled softness of his true self surviving in a difficult world.” Kora reached for the cigarette and pulled it back to life with a deep inhalation.

I nodded empathetically, hoping my silence would encourage him to continue.

“And that’s what I love about this drama series,” he said quickly, exhaling smoke again.

“...and about many of these Japanese dramas which hark back to a way of life where there was an order to things based on the harsh necessities of everyday life. They show a world where people’s feelings are buried under a need to maintain local community obligations, where doing something that you don’t want to do to please someone else isn’t about personal choice – making yourself feel better for helping others – but is about self denial; the very suppression of the self – for you may be asked to behave or act against your wishes for the maintenance of the wider community. And it is in that denial, that suppression, where we can see someone

suffering, and that suffering is at once sad - in that it is suffering – and strong - in that it is suffering for the greater good.”

Kora stabbed his cigarette out, his body language signaling a desire to distance himself momentarily from the thoughts in his head. He picked up a remote control from the table between us and made his way over to the television and video at the other side of the room.

As he knelt down to insert a video cassette into the player he turned his head towards me. “I didn’t understand that then; that strength – the value of those ways. I only saw the suffering and hardness of my father and mother’s world and what it left out of our lives. But what it is, or was, is right here - a people attempting to survive with and amongst each other, preserving values which fit a difficult way of life. Those were values that may be unnecessary for many young people today who have their own ways of life, but they still contain important lessons on how to live with others”.

The screen flickered into life and Kora made his way to the fridge, retrieved two fresh cans of beer and returned to his seat opposite me. He placed the cans on the table between us. He was a studious looking man wearing a large pair of glasses, hair half-greased back from his face, and his expression just now was earnest, in contrast to his more light-hearted modes. Then his face would turn mischievous, like a child’s, and his tone playful.

He would probably become more fun loving again later, I thought, when the drama was over and the others arrived. He would take on the role of entertainer, enticing us

all into his orbit by his anecdotes and character analysis. But it struck me that underneath even his episodes of wit and apparent boyishness lay the same look about his eyes that I could see now: an involvement with those around him, a keen awareness of people and their ways. And as he fiddled with the remote control, sending the advertisements proceeding the drama into a spin of image and sound, I thought about what he had said; how, for Kora, these dramas were in some way a re-enactment of a world which, having mystified him in childhood, could now be seen and understood as an adult. Through them, Kora could understand why his father was so distant, and attempt to understand him in the only way he now could: through what he represented – a particular cultural way of life.

BECOMING COMPLETE PEOPLE

It was an observation, I thought, which illustrated some of the mechanics that lie behind the creation of our self-concept or identity: that we use past experience of familial relationships to help build us into a present reality that makes us seem ‘complete’ and continuous as members of a collective. So our experiences in our family and community (our familial worlds) are linked to larger ideas of ourselves as part of cultural and/or national traditions. These larger scale identities, it seems, often have their roots in the very personal identities from which they have grown – in the fact that a presentation of what Japanese traditional culture is reminds us of our dead father, our childhood, our personal history. And vice-versa - that a look into our own personality may bring out the connections the other way – that *I* am American or French or Japanese.

It seems that this building of ourselves through a blend of the intimate detail and collective representation that exist in our social environments is common throughout all of our societies. In attempting to understand these connections, Geertz (1983), goes so far as to see how it is a “hopping back and forth between” the “most local of local detail and the most global of global structure” that creates the “conceptual rhythm” of our social lives (1983: 69). This conceptual rhythm has also been known in anthropology as the hermeneutic circle (Dilthey, see again Geertz, 1983). The idea of the circle illustrates the constancy of our efforts to make one interpretative framework explain the other—the local explain the global, the familial explain the collective, and vice versa⁵.

In making this circular connection more “concrete”, Carrithers (1996) shows how the plans and hopes of the Indian Jains to establish themselves as a distinct ethnic group consisted of efforts to ground their collective identity into a real set of concrete interactions. When Carrithers initially observed them, the Jains already had a meaningful abstract understanding of themselves, but lacked the local detail of interactions based on their identity: their imaginations needed to “be based on a experienced community” (pp. 546). By arranging occasions which discussed and brought together people and issues relevant to the cause, the Sabha organisation (with which the Jains were involved) managed to provide them with a set of social relations which could begin to “render the imagination into experience in its meetings”. These ‘grounded’ forums of social interaction eventually managed to provide the Jains with a real sense of their own ethnicity – stamping, to paraphrase Carrithers, a ‘seal’ of

⁵ Fernandez, (1986), talks of a “metaphoric cross-referencing of domains... (that) provide [sic.] us with the sensation of wholeness” (pp.25).

experience on an otherwise imagined collectivity. The Jains' efforts to give themselves a meaningful identity finally worked because they were able to combine real social interaction with their abstract identity—making themselves “concrete” through the combination of the two. The two social spheres were linked and the ability to participate within and across them made their community ‘concretely imagined’ (1996: 546) – whole in its encompassing of the real and abstract levels of participation.

Our familial worlds and our collective identities work together, then, to give us a sense of completeness. And this conceptual rhythm of reinforcing the local with the global and vice versa is so pervasive that the collective identities that we form in response to our local concerns become powerful expressions of our perceived place in the intimate world of feelings and experience. It was, after all, Kora's relationship with his father—his inability to “reach” him as a child—which we see as involving him in the need to re-enter the way of life he experienced in childhood through its dramatized re-enactment. From here he can “observe” this social system as a member of an “audience”; he can reflect on the ways in which a “traditional” way of life worked to inhibit the ability to express feelings and emotions—how social sanctions worked to restrict individuality, but aided the social and physical survival of the wider group. He can also integrate these values—attempt to resurrect them—to complement the more “modern” (youth-driven) values that have come to exist in his contemporary vision of his society.

Geertz's ethnography of the Balinese cockfight—an exciting, illegal gathering of villagers around the staging of battle between two cocks wearing lethal ‘spurs’—helps

us to understand what is happening when we “observe” our ways of life, when we represent key components of our imagined collective heritage. In the ethnography, Geertz questions how the Balinese, who, otherwise a shy, cautious, evasive and controlled people, “portray themselves as wild and murderous, with manic explosions of instinctual cruelty” when at the cockfight (Geertz, 1993: 446). Geertz concludes that the cockfight allows a public stage on which sentiments which, hidden in the contexts of everyday social hierarchies, can be displayed and represented.

A peculiar fusion of Polynesian title ranks and Hindu castes, the hierarchy of pride is the moral backbone of the society. But only in the cockfight are the sentiments upon which that hierarchy rests revealed in their natural colors. Enveloped elsewhere in a haze of etiquette, a thick cloud of euphemism and ceremony, gesture and illusion, they are here expressed in only the thinnest disguise of an animal mask, a mask which in fact demonstrates them far more effectively than it conceals them. Jealousy is as much a part of Bali as poise, envy and grace, brutality as charm; but without the cockfight the Balinese would have a much less certain understanding of them... (1993: 447)

It is in seeing the day-to-day hierarchies and status relations expressed upon a public stage - contained in the Balinese way of life through the staging of sentiments and emotions from the ‘real’ world in a ‘safe’, ‘detached’ one where cocks are understood to represent men—that the Balinese weave together the various threads of their social relations. In the staging of a cultural form of expression such as the cockfight, the audience gains a view of themselves – a meta-social perspective of their own way of

life – a mirror on the intricate ranking of peoples and corresponding collective existences that results in their society.

Such mirrors are not only provided in Balinese villages with roosters, they also exist in London theatres with actors, in Spanish books with characters, in Chinese magazines with pictures, on Indian radio in sound, and in American cinemas and on world-wide television with images. What all these ‘stages’ have in common is that they provide spaces in which we can interpret readings of our own experience - places where we can tell stories to ourselves about ourselves. Geertz, in reference to the Balinese, sees this telling of stories as part of the rich ‘textual’ content of cultural forms. We create texts, he asserts, to ‘spell out’ the workings of cultural ethos and private sensibility in an external collective. Thus for the Balinese, the cockfight is a chance to witness the thrill of risk, the despair of loss, the pleasure of triumph, “*yet what it says* is not merely that risk is exciting, loss depressing, or triumph gratifying... but that it is of these emotions, thus exemplified, that society is built and individuals put together” (1993: 449 my emphasis).

Kora, in his use of the Japanese drama, reflects on some of the values that put together a way of life. He reflects on how it was through self-sacrifice, through putting the survival of the group before the individual, that Japanese society was built and its individuals put together. Again, however, this Japan is one that Kora sees passing into history. The cultural “text” or narrative is contrasted with a young generation who retain none of the historically provided codes of harmonious co-habitation characteristic of his parents’ society. These ‘old’ values are “unnecessary for so many young people today who have their own ways of life, still contain important lessons

on how to live with others...”. In thus defining himself against his perception of a younger generation, Kora uses the drama to align the familial world of his childhood with a collective understanding of his “place” in a wider Japanese society populated with a variety of ways of seeing the world.

Thus ‘texts’ or narratives—however they may be represented—help us to build essential bridges between familial experience and collective identity; they represent our familial worlds in a presentation of our collective and represent our collectives through the portrayal of our familial ways of life. They help to close the hermeneutic circle and give us that all-important sense that we are “complete” in the social world in which we seek definition and identity.

Perhaps one of the most striking aspects of Kora’s dialogue, however, is not what it says about the way that we are involved in the construction of our sociality, but how it reveals that the mirrors that we look at to represent our collectives, and the familial realities in which we find ourselves, are quite different from our parents’ and grandparents’ generations. And not only are they different from our elders’ but they seem increasingly similar across cultural and national borders. Kora’s need to find place in a “traditional” Japanese values he experienced from his childhood, and to integrate them back into a society where he feels has lost touch with them, reminds us of our own efforts to come to terms with new visions of ourselves all over an ever-industrializing world.

MODERN MINDS AND MIRRORS—OUR COMMON EXPERIENCE

In a world where social relations are structured around labour exchange and operate as part of an agricultural way of life which has little contact with the world beyond the immediate community—the world of Kora’s parents or of the Balinese at the time when Geertz studied them—what need is there for a collective concept that reflects anything other than the local, directly experienced world⁶? In Kora’s parents’ and grandparents’ time, would there have been a need to find a sense of “cultural place”, as Kora seems to demonstrate now? Would his elders, more concerned with a fundamental physical and social survival, have been interested in working out who they were in the unfolding of patterns of generational change, values and identities, or as part of wider cultural histories?

In the pre-industrial world, the concern with finding one’s place in an expanded world of large-scale collectives may not have occurred in quite the same way as it appears to do so now. Therefore:

We might, of course, simply say that the search for self-identity is a modern problem... (and that) the idea that each person has a unique character and special potentialities that may or may not be fulfilled is alien to pre-modern culture... No doubt there is something in these views. But I do not think it is the existence of the ‘individual’ that is at stake, as a distinctive feature of modernity, and even less so the self.

⁶ I am concerned here with documenting the histories and experiences of the vast majority of agricultural peoples, rather than focusing on the “higher” classes of people who may have had different ways of life and different mirrors on their collective existence.

‘Individuality’ has surely been valued – within varying limits – in all cultures and so, in one sense or another, has been the cultivation of individual potentialities... Rather than talking in general terms of ‘individual’, ‘self’ or even ‘self-identity’ as distinctive of modernity, we should try to break things down into finer detail. (1991: 74-75)

Giddens makes an important observation here. For it is not that we necessarily need to say that the search for self within local and collective realities involves a new kind of self expression—every culture has offered its own indigenous psychologies which have offered a whole range of human expressions (see Heelas & Lock, 1981). But rather, we suggest that modernity⁷ brings with it new abstract forms—new collective mirrors such as the notion of common culture and nation—which, as Giddens goes on to point out, characterise modern life as “permeated by abstract systems, and in which the reordering of time and space realigns the local with the global, (and under which) the self undergoes massive change.” (pp.80).

Modernity—and the effects of industrialisation—have quite clearly presented a whole new set of mirrors which have greatly changed our sense of collective membership. For example, in 1936 it was obvious that many rural people still didn’t see themselves as part of a commonly experienced Japanese national collective. A coup attempt in that year demonstrated this well. Junior officers in the Imperial Guard and the 1st Division led 1,400 troops in the occupation of key locations in Tokyo. They sought to establish a military dictatorship under the emperor, and to increase the military’s roles

⁷ Modernity can be a problematic term. What does it really mean to say that we live in a “modern” versus a “non-modern” world? There is no one point at which “tradition” gives way to the “modern”, nor, perhaps will there ever be. I will examine these issues as I progress, seeing modernity as representing a period of industrialisation rather than extending its meaning out to separate the “traditional” and the “modern” as two separate states.

and involvement in politics. The coup failed and its leaders were executed. 800 miles away in the southern island of Kyushu, in the small village of Suze Mura, “only a few village officials and schoolteachers so much as discussed the matter, and many people did not even know what had happened” (Embree, 1972 [1939]). Today, of course, just as in hundreds of other nations in the world, such an incident would rock the domestic order of Japan—people would be intensely involved in its inception and outcome.

We have, then, passed through a process whereby our ideas about ourselves in the world have expanded beyond smaller regions to encompass much larger collectives. And some of industrialisation’s communicative technologies are to be held accountable for this. The newspaper⁸ is one such example. It had only recently arrived in the rural areas of Japan in 1936 and its influence was only just beginning to pick up (Embree, 1972 [1939]). It was not common for people to converse around what we now call “news” stories, or even to be aware of what was happening in the upper levels of government. More profoundly, the lack of such commonly shared information meant there was little concept among the rural majority that they were even part of a collective nation state. Indeed, there was little notion of a shared *culture* at this time either—regional identities seemed stronger than culture or nation wide ones (see Yoshino, 1992; Fukutake, 1980).

In Japan, as elsewhere, the emergence of the nation state and the corresponding notion of nationally shared culture, in its spread to even the most remote corners of our

⁸ As we will see later in this thesis, the newspaper and the printing press are associated with the development of our ability to imagine ourselves as part of nation state at all (Anderson, 1991), and help to add credence to the idea that industrialisation and modernity bring with them a powerful force for changing the way we think about ourselves in the world.

countries, have completely changed the way that people think of themselves as members of collectives. Many millions of people around the world have gained a sense of national identity as result of modernisation and its bringing together of communication technologies that provide a particular kind of reflection on the boundaries and borders of an expanded social group. Indeed, nations can now be seen to be the world's common imaginative abstract large-scale collective structure (see Wallerstein 1997), whether or not we choose to belong to them.

The effects and influence of this common collective mirror of nation have been far-reaching and profound⁹. As we have seen, new abstract collective concepts seek to be made real in concrete social interaction. And this need to ground new expanded imagined collective into real social action has resulted in a vast array of historical events and movements, not to mention two World Wars and countless other examples of bloodshed, as we have attempted to adjust our familial worlds of action with and against the abstract ones of membership and collective solidarity. Perhaps more than at any other period in history, the concentration of world shattering events, of hundreds of indigenous movements and claims for regional separation, are direct and indirect results of a force that has involved the vast majority of the world's population within a short historical period. The 20th century, in short, was one in which modernity industrialized the minds of us all.

Occasionally, these mirrors of the culture/nation resulted in views of humanity that caused large genocidal agendas, such as Nazi Germany. Or, with less devastating

⁹ Again, while the nation state has been in existence for more than a century (Gellner, 1997; Anderson, 1991), I am concerned with understanding not just the minority understandings of place in a wider world (government officials, aristocracies etc.), but rather wish to represent the agricultural majority of the pre-industrial and industrial age.

results, a belief in the divinity of the national collective has encouraged people to lose their lives as suicide bombers, as in Japan during the Second World War or across the Middle East today. Likewise, if the collective constructs of culture and nation happen to disagree (they are intimately linked in the universal presence of culture and organization, see Gellner, 1997)—the political boundaries being different from ways of life/languages passed down through the generations—the results can be catastrophic and last for many generations, as in Yugoslavia (Gellner, 1997).

As well as altering and adding to representations of the collective—the mirrors for the kind of people that we are and the need to make those images real and concrete in daily life—industrialisation has caused a profound change in all of our actual familial relations. We have seen how whole communities are reconfigured as money and machines reorder social relations and hierarchies (Lopreato, 1967), and of course, how this process continues to affect millions in industrialising countries world-wide. As many communities reorganise themselves broadly around the notion that they receive payment instead of providing work on the basis of exchange, so the local and familial networks of family and community break apart and need to be remade to suit the new economic system (Embree, 1972 [1939]). The resulting changes in the familial organisation of life again beg for a collective representation, and this is where those attempting to adjust to reconfigured local life experience and seek to express themselves in the only terms available: as members of expanded collectives aligning with, or responding to, broader ideas of culture and/or nation.

The ‘industrialization’ of the imaginative realm thus seems as much part of the

process of modernity as the industrialization of the physical world¹⁰. Just as the physical infrastructures that surround us are the result of an influx of money, machines, production processes and divisions of labour, so our imaginations and conceptions of ourselves are responses to changes in social relations that these processes have brought in their wake. Modernity and its industrialising effects—its communication technologies, its reorganisation of communities—have brought people together in the imagination on a scale previously unimaginable, and the world as we experience it today can be seen to be in constant circular response to the influx of new collective identities and new familial realities, as we attempt to find meaning and self representation in each. These meanings and representations look very different from those that our parents, grandparents and certainly great grandparents would have recognised.

It seems we have a more thorough understanding, then, of some of the conditions of Kora's self-concept—of the common desire to find local and global continuity and completeness in a world adapting fast to new patterns of thought, action and identity. What I ask now is this: How, and through what processes, have these changes become salient—been made real? How it is that we move from understanding ourselves in one way to understanding ourselves in another? From one familial system to the next? What intimate processes are involved in the transition of understanding ourselves as part of one type of collective, to understanding ourselves as part of a different one? How, in short, do we *actually* change to adapt to new ways of seeing ourselves in the world, and how can we observe this change happening?

¹⁰ Gellner says “nationalism is rooted in modernity” (1997:13).



Kora reached again for the can of Yebisu beer, taking it firmly in his grasp and raising it to his mouth. After a hearty glug, he set it down and pulled a Seven Stars cigarette from a soft pack, lighting it casually while he turned his head to gaze at the blue screen of the awaiting television. Then, with the kind of importance one gives to words that have been deemed worth thinking about, he spoke,

“You know it’s funny, in some ways I think that my father tried to prevent me from receiving the same ideas about obligation towards the community and self-sacrifice – the same notions that he had received from his parents, and had felt throughout his life. Now that I think about it, I remember times when he would try and communicate his desire for me not to end up living in such an environment. Not that he would often say such things directly, of course, but in his encouraging me to be my own person – in the absence of his pushing me into the inner circles and workings of the community – I think he wanted me to come to different conclusions, to lead a life less... bound. That he cared about breaking such a pattern – cared about giving me the chance to see a different world from his own – makes me think what a good man he was.”

GENERATIONAL CHANGE AND THE MOVEMENTS OF IDENTITY

The fact that the intimate patterns of adjustment that we make in the familial and collective realities of our lives should come to define the very confines of our children’s larger imaginings of their place in wider social worlds, is here touchingly acknowledged by Kora’s father in his desire for his son to ‘lead a life less bound’. It

is a fact of which we are all probably aware on some level, and have even experienced. Indeed, it is our experience of the freedoms fought and won, the restrictions imposed by pre-industrial life, and those imposed by the collective identities and familial realities of the adjustment to industrialisation, *through the generations*, that we have played out our lives. It is the way that modernity's familial and collective effects manifest themselves in the most intimate settings of our families—our familial worlds—and how this “raw material” of social life then is passed on and dealt with, that begins to illustrate some of the patterns of change which influence how we think and conceive the world around us.

Here, it seems, generational change has a large part to play in how social change plays itself out in our intimate lives and identities. And here again, we see the importance of narratives and “story-telling” in propelling and directing the process. For Kora, the interplay between the value systems of his parents' generation and his present, modern existence allows him to locate himself within a narrative which charts his individual movements alongside collective ideas and values. We could see this narrative beginning with a consideration of his relationship with his father making him resentful of the ‘traditional’ community – that he somehow rejected this model until recently. His father dead, he returns to examine the world in which he had lived as a child in order to explore it (through its dramatic reenactment), and after such exploration, realizes that world does have values which he can respect and identify with. These values have become something that he can think he has in common with his late father.

It is suggested in a collection of papers on generational identity and change (Bertaux

& Thompson, 1993) that such family stories act as 'scripts' which successive generations are compelled to follow - narratives tied to particular roles that members of the family may choose to take on. Is it these scripts, perhaps, that allow us to see ourselves placed in the midst of such complex social goings-on, their 'content' motivating us to intervene in the 'story', with whatever measures (pro-action or withdrawal), we see necessary?

So, understanding narratives and involving ourselves within them seems to give us that all-important motivation to act(out) roles – to conclude identities – within our family and other collectives. And the fact that these roles solidify in the family and are seen to continue to influence us throughout the life course could well be to do with the fact that narrative understanding and telling is seen to first develop in the family. A study by Judy Dunn (1988), for example, shows how, as early as at age three, mere questioning gives way to the child inventing rhetorically designed stories - usually in the form of excuses. This not only shows the child's awareness of a common system of interpretation - the narrative system - but its need fully to adopt and use it in order to live and survive socially in the family unit (see also Bakhurst et al. 1995).

Again, then, the use of narrative in the family both prepares us for increasingly complex social life while immersing us in a complex social whole. Tied to generational codes of transmission, these narratives can have long-term influence on the social identity we form in this, our first complex social environment. At the age of three, our mastery of the common currency of social interpretation may show itself in excuses not to bath at bathtime or bed at bedtime, but the same system, operating from and upon us over many decades, can influence even the type of people we

become - the identities we make, maintain and reject. In this way, narratives become part of the tapestry of our self-conceptions and social relations, providing us with a key methodology through which we 'plug' ourselves in to the structure of social groups.

Ultimately these life paths – the result of accepted, modified and/or rejected values from the previous generation – come to represent the micro-level workings of wider social transformations. Thus, as the family suffers the tremors of change from higher political, cultural and economic forces, it adapts, shaping itself around new opportunities or maintaining its place through resistance to change. It is through this inter-linked state of the family within a matrix of social groupings that the changing relationships within it, the stories and life paths which it determines, become “the grist of social description, the raw material for both history and social change” (Bertaux & Thompson, 1993:36).

The transmission of family values can be seen, then, to define for us the boundaries of our social worlds, giving them a significance of continuity within a framework of change. It is our experience as individuals which determines how we will transmit socio-cultural information to our children, and thus those experiences become their experience – that they then need to determine their reaction to our transmissions. That we, for example, reject the conventions of the world in which we live may make our children reject our very rejection – becoming supporters of the status quo. Likewise, a complete acceptance of the status quo on our part may spawn rebels, or fellow conservatives. In reality, of course, just as we have selected parts of our parents' codes of transmission for our use, so our children monitor our values and ideals as

they progress in other social worlds – such as the community and culture – and select from our social raw material what is useful for them in the contemporary setting (see Bertaux & Thompson, 1993, and also Spencer, 1991).

So generational change in the way we interact and form roles in our familial worlds helps to set up the precedents for the way in which we approach the forming of our identities and our sense of place in society as a whole. Generational change has an absolutely central role to play in how societies move from seeing themselves in one way to seeing themselves in another. Not least through intergenerational interaction in the family, we gain narrative understanding and story telling, an invaluable part of our later social repertoire. But even more importantly, generational relations set us into patterns of thought and approach as we respond to the world of the generation before us, and integrate and consolidate its values and social systems within the present realities which face us.

Kora's father helps to illustrate that those of us alive today are the result of previous generations who have worked hard to consolidate changing local systems and collective identities—to find meaning and make a way of life out of the available social systems and collective images that have presented themselves throughout recent history. In many cases, despite the stresses that come with making significant leaps of understanding and adjustment to ways of life and identities (and perhaps because of these stresses), parents have attempted—and continue to attempt—to free their children from the hardships they themselves encountered. Here, then, I turn to examine the notion of relative generational mobility and how it too is a crucial element in determining change in the way that subsequent generations perceive the

world around them and their place within it.



Kora paused for a moment, set down the remote control and snapped open one of the cans of beer, offering it to me. I took it with a ‘thanks’. The television screen was a bright blue hue and it seemed to wait patiently for its master to give it an instruction. Kora was facing me, though, and extended the pause by opening his own can of beer and taking a sip. Talking about his family had made him nostalgic. And it was as if he was talking while watching action in some private theatre, that he continued,

“My brother – humph – what a little arsehole. We always used to fight. Once my Dad tried to step in to stop us just as I was lunging for him, and I hit the ol’ man square in the jaw”. Kora’s head motions across the table to act out the scene, his fist coming up to his cheek in mock rage.

“After I left the community at 18 – about as soon as I could – I would, of course, return to see them all occasionally. On those occasions, it would feel like we were a family – when we would get together at the *Obon* festival, or whenever. Of course, my brother and I would still fight, and my father would try and stop us – he would get drunk, and my mother would, with her strength and wit, attempt to keep us all in check. But it’s funny how we could somehow share in each other – in the family – once we had moved on ourselves. Actually, my brother still lives at home today, and sort of looks after my Mum, so maybe it was just me – having left – who felt free.”

MOBILE MINDS, MOBILE IDENTITIES

The notion of freedom—or mobility—is intertwined in both the mechanisms of generational change and in the complementary construction of our individual lifecourses and collective identities. For Kora, the circumstances of his childhood existence made him eager to move out of the family and community as soon as he could. For him, mobility was represented in the world outside his familial relations, in making a go of it on his own—distancing himself from a world he saw as constraining and limiting. For his brother, however, we gain the impression that mobility was to be found at home since he still lives there. Perhaps Kora's brother saw a supportive home base as offering a variety of opportunities: a platform from which to build a secure existence?

In a paper by Thompson (1993) on the role of the family in the shaping of life paths, we see that for Ben – a retired miner – it was the hardship of his life which left him with the desire to transmit his experience in the form of advice to his two sons *not* to pursue his chosen career. “Before either of them left school, I said, ‘I can’t rule you, but my advice to you is to try and keep away from pit work, colliery work. I can’t make you, it’s up to you, but I don’t advise it.’ Cos I’d done my life in it” (1993:15). It is such accounts which Thompson sees as “at once the raw material of social history and an interpretation of social mobility. It shows both the strength of transgenerational family culture, and how within that framework individuals can choose not only to accept but also to reject their transgenerational inheritance” (1993:15).

This choice of what to do with our transgenerational inheritance, then, is linked closely to what we define mobility to be. Is it a move away from the values and worlds of our elders, or is a bolstering of their very adaptations to life as we too perceive it? Is mobility to be “free” of social systems and identities, or to “build on” them? Perhaps our definition of mobility is ultimately determined by our individual experience of the social life around us. If that experience is very different from the world our elders define and determine, we may seek to move beyond their familial and imaginative restraints; if our experienced world is very similar and fits the logic of their ways of life and worldviews, we may see that mobility lies in continuing their process of adaptation. In the following examination I will suggest that there are discernible patterns in the way that mobility has been defined generationally.

It is, then, through this key pursuit of making spaces for opportunities – of building consistently on the key touchstones of our unfolding lives – that we form a resulting self-concept that is consistent and continuous. This pursuit of potentialities and opportunities in both our familial and collective lives I will hereafter refer to using the term *mobility*. This will include the use of the term in its usual application – as the physical access to improving economic circumstances – but will also refer to its *imaginative* equivalent: the abstract ideas, notions, and visions that we have of ourselves in the world, and the degree to which we feel able to expand and direct them.

For as I hope to demonstrate throughout this examination, mobility is wrapped up in the other forces of identity making. So just as individual and familial worlds seek to complement and re-enforce one another, so the threads of mobility seek respective

collective and familial representation. This is to say, the mobility we seek in our making of individual lifecourses feeds, and is fed, by a mobility we seek in defining ourselves in the imaginative, collective worlds. Thus the life story of an old German Nazi reveals the degree to which he chose his political and cultural affiliations in response to individual needs to distance himself from his father's social systems and worldviews, and resurrect and re-legitimise a bourgeois family narrative (Sieder, 1993).

Thus the notion of mobility is not only central to the familial world—and to the following of individual life courses, as I have hoped to indicate, but, in turn, is vital to the aligning of the self to particular kinds of collective narrative. Our respective definitions of mobility and what it represents to us illustrate the ways in which we try to improve opportunities for ourselves (and the next generation) at all stages of our life, and how these efforts begin to channel our memberships down certain avenues, resulting in collective identities based upon our most intimate familial experiences.

Would Kora lament the lost importance of Japanese tradition if he hadn't have felt unable to reach his father or had had to continue living in his parents' community? The mobility we achieve in our familial worlds seems inextricably linked to how we assemble our collective identities. Or, as Ikeda, a 76 year old informant once put it to me: "Mobility and freedom in one's locale allows a mobility and freedom of the mind."

Of course, mobility, modernity and generational change are all composite parts of the process of social change—they are all intimately linked and driven. So mobility itself

is affected by modernity's playing itself out through the generation. Through its impact on the familial and collective levels of our existence simultaneously, modernity can completely reorder the perception of mobility over the generation. The next two parts of this thesis will demonstrate how this occurs in Japan in a variety of ways.

Nothing has changed our patterns of real social, and imagined community—mobility more than the impact of industrialisation and modernity on our societies (see Durkheim, 1984). The changing perceptions of mobility over the generation seem a vital part of our building ourselves into surrounding social groups both on the local level of family and community and on the abstract, imagined level of culture and nation. Those in the industrialized world may not be modernity's first children—its first wave of change—yet we are still very much the children of modernity's effects as we continue to adjust to our place in a world, a place rocked by change on the familial and collective levels of existence.

In the 21st century, it is almost taken for granted that modernity has changed how we think, act and imagine ourselves in the world. But are we aware of the ways in which its legacies continue to define us as members of social groups, as people of a particular age? And are we aware of the ways in which the ongoing consolidation of its effects generationally are beginning to create new forces, new definitions of mobility and new familial realities and collective spaces for the living out of our lives and identities? Do we really understand how younger generations build on the influence of their elders, experience their familial worlds and imagine themselves as part of wider collectives?



Kora paused momentarily, as if to say something else. He took the remote control in his hands, and with a gesture so deliberate in motion as to suggest that what he was about to do would speak for him, pressed 'play'. The blue television took up the command and obediently changed to display the black tracking picture of the first few seconds of the drama tape that would allow Kora to share his notion of traditional Japanese community and culture with me.

THE LAND OF RISING SONS AND DAUGHTERS

There seems no better place to begin an attempt to address these questions than Japan. And there seems no better a focus than on *generational change* for bringing successive visions on the self-in-society to bear. The official modernisation of its society began recently—in 1868—and its current living generations thus often possess an intimate knowledge of the effects of modernity on their familial systems and collective identities. Indeed, a few much older (predominantly rural) Japanese still seem to think and act in very similar ways to their pre-industrial elders, while younger Japanese often seem a whole world away in their perception of themselves as members of a contemporary world nation.

In a world where modernity has entered all our lives in profound and life-changing ways, what can the changing Japanese generations tell us about familial and collective

transitions occurring world wide? Are we, all the children of modernity, particular in the way we conduct our lives, and construct our collective identities compared to our elders who were “struck” by modernity much earlier on? How have we been able to adapt? Are there patterns of generational change occurring in Japan common to all places and societies? Are Japan’s youth representative of a world wide generation that can be seen to consolidate their place in society in similar ways, and produce similarly configured identities? Do they illustrate any new ways of seeing the world—are they somehow more adept at managing the claims that new familial realities and new collective constructs make upon us? Are they making new identities and alternative familial social systems?

In almost all places our concerns to find place and identity seem to be localized versions of industrializing processes that have a universal effect. How we are dealing with these concerns as to whether the landmarks—whether the points of identification within our narratives¹¹—of the past are being replaced by new ones seen as useful by new generations, whether the world is being imagined and constructed in new ways that reflect the changing nature of our societies’ adaptations to the powerful forces of modernity: these are the issues of the contemporary state of nations and their futures and the fundamental questions of studies concerned with patterns of identity.

The familial reality and collective mirrors of contemporary youth may be very different from those of their elders. The old mirrors are perhaps no longer useful, and are being replaced by new more appropriate stages and narratives. Older familial systems may be too restrictive, and new ones are being introduced. As I begin to

¹¹ “Landmarks” are commonly understood observations and/or metaphors that relate to, and identify particular narratives (see Machin & Carrithers, 1996).

examine some of the adaptations that the children of modernity have made in their real and abstract lives, I shall first focus on the changes that are observable in the *Familial Worlds* of my informants – the ways in which three successive generations have understood themselves as part of Japanese families and communities. Having examined how these familial shifts in memberships and identity have then influenced the construction of collective memberships, I shall turn to attempt an understanding of how Japanese *Collective Identities* have gone through various changes and are being imagined and made, and how they too, in turn, have begun to alter the social relations of young Japanese.

Although these examinations will be based upon the understanding that modernity has introduced a variety of elements into our lives that have changed our way of thinking, I do not intend to gather evidence to form a verifiable list of such elements. There are many studies which provide detailed analysis on the effect of money, for example, on agricultural ways of life, or geographical mobility on the development of the family system, and where relevant, I reference such studies. What I shall attempt to do here is identify some of the key shifts in the local and global construction of identity that represent these modernity-driven changes. We shall, then, be looking – like Zeldin's (1994) analysis of history – at intimate portraits of people negotiating freedoms and identities, rather than attempting to – like Dore's (1967) analysis of "Aspects of Change in Modern Japan" – isolate the factors that caused their emergence. And so it is with this perspective coupled with a concern to reveal the past consequences and future impact of a continuing modernity on our identities, that I continue.



An elderly woman clothed in period agricultural wear turned to her husband and said,

“Don’t you think that I know, my husband, how difficult it has been?”

Her expression held a mixture of sympathy and private despair. She began to weep.

Her husband, sitting opposite her, looked at the table, his head nodding gently in an inexpressible grief, unable to voice his feelings to his wife.

The scene was indeed well done and had filled Kora, myself and the whole room with the tension of human suffering. But no sooner had we silently acknowledged the connection between this way of life and the restriction it put on people’s ability to express emotions than we turned to each other with raised eyebrows.

“Well, well...” said Kora, neatly replacing the atmosphere of unspoken suffering with that of emotional confederation.

“Ummm,” said I, signaling my understanding of the drama, and its relation to Kora’s need to illustrate some of the features of older Japanese life. Our gaze returned to the television, where the credits were appearing over the top of still scenes from the drama.

Kora grunted as he eased himself up from his lounge chair and headed towards the

make-shift bar in the corner of the room. He turned off the television on the way, throwing the remote control onto a nearby sofa.

The silence was immediate and reclaimed the whole room and its surroundings. The sun had sunk below the horizon and now only the sound of crickets could be heard – calmness settled in. As Kora rooted the fridge for beer, I stood and made my way to the large glass patio-window. The blackness outside meant that all I could see was my own reflection in the glass.

“Wine or beer?” asked Kora from behind the bar.

“Oooh, a beer please, barman.” I answered, and made my way to one of the bar stools, where I sat, removing my cigarettes and lighter and placing them on the counter.

Kora put a glass of beer in front of me, and I took a sip, taking the fruity liquid into my mouth for a second before swallowing in a loud gulp. I felt good. The atmosphere was not only congenial; there was a sense of shared human experience between Kora and me, the leftovers of our talk and of the drama. It was good to share that unspoken empathy with the human condition – it gave a sense of freedom to the soul, I thought. It was as if all the accumulated rubbish that we build up in our lives – all the habits that we don’t like in ourselves – could be put aside for a moment. For what were they except drops in the ocean of a humanity that has seen it all? In our own tiny way we represented that humanity, and, for that minute or so at least, had some sense of its universality.

In the distance, I heard the faint groan of an engine. Kora heard it too, lifting his glass to his lips and taking a large slug of wine. He looked at his watch.

“Well, that must be Moto.”

We waited, motionless, tasting the last drops of our spun perspective on the human condition. The car drew up to the front of the cabin, and I heard a door open. I took a cigarette from the packet in front of me and lit it, then gulped another swig of beer from my glass. It would be nice to see Moto, I thought, haven't seen him here for a while. And although the last dregs of the atmosphere which Kora and I had created were seeping from the room with Moto's imminent approach, the cup which contained them was being replaced with the anticipation of a new 'take' on what it was to be here, human, social, alive and Japanese...

PART TWO—

Familial Worlds

FAMILY

We heard the car door slam shut and moments later the door downstairs open.

“Hey!” came a shout from below.

“Whey Hey!!” Kora and I called in unison.

“‘Bout fucking time!” joked Kora.

Moto’s form came into full view step by step as he ascended the stairs, his face beaming widely. Reaching the top of the staircase he greeted us with his usual understated joking manner, and headed for the make-shift bar to unpack a bag of beer into the fridge.

“What you guys been up to then?”

“Kora here just showed me *kita-no-kuni-kara*”, I replied evenly– too much enthusiasm or too little may have taken away from my private rapport with Kora.

Moto laughed mockingly. “Kora’s an old fart isn’t he? Watching all that crap – he loves that stuff”.

I chuckled and retorted with conviction, “No, it was interesting”.

Kora smiled and said, “Hey, Moto, but you love that other drama about Kyushu – what’s it called?”

“*Hakata-Ryojin*. Yeah, but that’s different, that’s like a warrior thing – more like historical fantasy sort of stuff. You just like all that depressing village lifestyle shit.”

Kora laughed and turned to face me, frowning in mock concern. “I don’t know why I invite this wanker around, you know.”

We all laughed and having found himself a cold beer from the fridge, Moto came to sit with us at the bar, took a Hope cigarette from a ten pack and lit it. He had a handsome face and a thoughtful expression that was generally referred to as *Kakoi* (cool) amongst the more sophisticated women of our Kyushu set.

“Well, cheers everyone!” Said Moto raising his glass. “To finishing work and being free to enjoy a drink!”

“Cheers!”

We drank.

“So,” I said, “you’re not keen on all these historical dramas then, Moto?”

“No, it’s not that; it’s just that they speak to a different generation, I think. Although having said that, my father was... is... just like one of those characters from one of those dramas. But Kora here can probably identify more with that kind of thing, right, Kora?”

“Yeah, you young things are a totally different bunch. Take everything for granted; don’t have the experience of hardship which makes you understand what human relationships are about.” Kora paused for a second, remembering that he and Moto often talked on the same level about such things. “Well, you’re a bit different, Moto, of course; you’re more switched on... but you know what I mean?”

We all knew what was being said. There was a discernible difference in the way that those with and those without direct experience of pre-industrial Japan fused with the landmarks and structures of Japanese community, culture and nation. These differences were sometimes evident – in the way that different generations viewed the outside world, spent money or travelled freely – or subtle, wrapped up in whole sets of attitudes and identities.

But how had these differences come about? How had Japan come to involve its inhabitants in such a transition, and what exactly had been changing? In the conversational pause between us – as the three of us nodded our acknowledgement of a society in social transition – my mind turned to Seijou, an informant/friend of mine with whom I had shared many an afternoon considering such things...

Seijou

Seijou has seen his fair share of unhappiness in his forty-six years. Not only is his marriage in tatters – his wife often takes to beating him physically during arguments

about their future – but his entire domestic situation is a prison from which he sees little chance of escape. His mother, to whom he was very close, died some years ago, leaving his bad tempered and difficult father to ‘command’ the running of the house in which Seijou lives with his wife and two small daughters. His wife wants him to be more responsible and to bring in more money, although he currently works fourteen-hour days and for the highest salary that the small town in which they live will permit. He would leave, happily, for a larger city – indeed he attended university in Tokyo and loved it – but his father’s constant ill health and Seijou’s status as the eldest son with the duty of maintaining the family house keep him trapped. Seijou now finds himself in his hometown of Amatetsu¹², a 40 minute drive away from the Kora’s mountain cabin.

His solution to his entrapment and the inevitability of his domestic life is completely to immerse himself in the small town relations which surround him – pandering to them, rather than knocking against them; attempting, it seems, to remove the possibility that there is any other way to be or think or live. Thus, Seijou’s life presents an ironic contrast: a series of snapshots which assert both the normality and inevitability of common hardships, and, in more trusted company, find him harshly criticising the

¹² We shall become more acquainted with Amatetsu and its surrounds in the second section of *Familial Worlds*.

perceived status-quo and even praying for the death of his father, that he might escape the constraints of his world.

His job – he is a salesman – very much reflects his desire to integrate with small town happenings. But there is another dimension to it too. His regular daily visits to the many households keep him in touch with normal every day folk – many of them part-time farmers who have lived in the area for generations. His time with these down-to-earth people reminds him of when his mother was alive. She would keep in touch with all the members of her community, sometimes taking him with her on her social rounds, sharing with him the hospitality that these kind people (for that is how he remembers them) would bestow upon a neighbour.

His visits provide him with a sample of these memories of good-will and community spirit, feeding his need to remain anchored in small town life lest he might glimpse a world and a freedom which he knows he could never obtain and thus set up an irresolvable conflict within him. After all, the last thing he needs is more secret desires that will never be fulfilled – more weight on his heart. But to those who will listen –

and there is a hidden confederation¹³ against convention and small town custom amongst the people whom he visits – he attempts to resolve his worries by voicing them. Sympathy is almost always forthcoming and Seijou takes strength from his network of fellow sufferers.

In a world that expects conformity to the social systems practised by the previous generation, Seijou finds both his imprisonment and his consolidation. We examine this paradox together on a bright and breezy summer's afternoon, as we lie on opposite sides of a small table basking in the heat of a *tatami* room, and enjoying cups of tea.

Seijou talks like a salesman. His voice is clear and continuous, punctuated by compliments to the person he is talking to or about. He communicates in regulated sections, as if he is trying to break down a subject to make it easily understood.

“It is so much more fun going round to visit everyone than drinking in those awful bars. Everyone is so kind and welcoming, and plies you with whatever you want to drink –

¹³ During his time on his rounds Seijou's conversations with his clients often revolve around criticisms of the social sanctioning nature of community life. There is a shared view that people are enduring this sanctions – even while they help to perpetuate them – together as a community.

and frequently with whatever you want to eat too – and there is time to talk about whatever takes your fancy.”

Seijou rises to take a noisy gulp of tea from the cup in front of him and then falls back on his elbow.

“We all take pleasure in each other’s company. And everyone is – really – so kind. For instance, they like you, Bruce, because you’re a good guy, and you says things straight.”

I have become accustomed to Seijou’s compliments and take them guardedly as I see him praise everyone he meets. I wonder briefly whether this technique was developed on the job or whether it has always been with him – a way of shifting the focus from his own situation to that of others. The question disappears without an answer and I decide to ask – suspicious now on brief reflection as to whether his words were genuinely meant to be complimentary - what he means by me ‘saying things straight’.

“Well, you know—” he replies, “if you think something about a person – or if you don’t want to do something, you will simply say so. That is certainly not the way Japanese people go about things.”

I sense in his answer both a desire to show me that I am different (a result perhaps of Seijou's positioning of himself within an enclosed¹⁴ community mind-set?) and a need to hide his feelings as though some issue here affects him deeply. I decide to be direct and broach the subject of his family relationships which I am interested in discussing with him. I ask him if he feels that his parents represented, for him, what he sees as the typical Japanese way of thinking.

He pauses briefly, his large eyes and square Mafioso-style face apparently about to reflect feelings which emerge from a different level of self-awareness.

“My mother was part of the world that didn't speak directly about things. But she, I think, only played a role within it – *appeared* as one of them. When I remember some of our visits to the neighbours of the time, I remember how she would get beyond all the formalities and surface stuff. She got straight to people's hearts. Her warmth and genuine compassion for others kind of made the idea of conspiracy against those who weren't following the rules of the family or community a petty pursuit – she somehow made everyone the same in her eyes. This is not to say,” Seijou adds quickly, “that she

¹⁴ See next section for a description of 'enclosed' vs. 'exposed' forms of community solidarity

didn't know how to perform, how to protect the values of the family, but somehow her perspectives and the way she dealt with people made all that secondary to the people themselves – what they were about.”

He looks sad and I am fearful that his memories might turn into a deeper reflection on his mother – he was very close to her and I do not want to upset him. I ask tentatively about his father's role in his family.

“Yes, he was very different. And still is of course.” Seijou lets lose a brief snort that could be taken as a half-laugh or a sound expressing more distaste than amusement.

“My father is quite convinced that he is protecting values and a way of life that are to go unquestioned. He is not only a difficult man but an arrogant one to boot. At eighty years old, he completely dictates how my wife and I live in the house; what is permissible, what is not. His is still the ‘head’ of the household, and until he dies, I can see no way in which I can begin to choose the direction that my own family will take.”

His attention seems to shift momentarily and reaching for another gulp of luke-warm tea, he says in a more assertive tone of voice:

“Japanese people are crap at communication. Not bad at it when they’re drunk, but terrible in their everyday lives. People don’t say what they mean. They dodge around their feelings, pretending that they are not there – pretending that they like things that they don’t, get on with people that they hate. It’s a stupid thing to do, but it is the Japanese way – a part of the culture.”

I have heard this before from Seijou and as always, his words make me feel sad. For his criticism is at once so accurate – in that it is such deep-seated cultural attitudes which keep him in the domestic life he hates so much – and so inaccurate, in that there are many Japanese (and people all over the world) who have the freedom to choose what they inherit from the previous generation. I remind him of what he said about his own mother, how she was a great communicator. But he gestures the comment away.

“Nope, I am stuck in my situation with no chance of escape. My wife hates her lot as much as I hate mine, but blames me for her life. When my mother was still alive, the idea of me having to return to this small town to continue the family household didn’t strike me as too bad a prospect. Of course, I would have liked to continue to live in Tokyo – I loved university life and had many friends. I also had good career prospects in the city that I would have loved to have taken up. Perhaps if that had happened, then

my wife would have learned to love me for what I would have given her and the children – a happy home in the city. As it is, my wife suffers my father’s rebukes, my job is crap and we have little ability to choose our future.”

We both pause but the brief silence fails to absorb Seijou’s words; they hang in the air between us, the leaden by-products of reduced opportunity.

I ask him tentatively why his wife is so hard on him, why she doesn’t help support him emotionally.

“She thought she was marrying someone who would give her greater choices, not narrow her world. She blames me intensely for that, for the fact that I have *restricted* her life – at least in her view. She is angry that I seem to be so capable of living and working in the circumstances that we do – that I don’t make some sort of stand.

“Of course, my mother’s premature death stopped any hope of me choosing anything.

With my father alone, it was straight back to the family home and a job in this small town.”

I ask Seijou if he thinks that this is the normal course of events for people of his generation.

“Oh yes. Yes indeed. Being the *chonnan* (eldest son) carries a big responsibility, and pulls everyone – to varying degrees – away from their independent lives (if they had independent lives in the first place) back to the family home. Of course, for some people it can be a big plus. They get an inheritance and, if their relationship with their parents is good (or their parents die in good time), they may feel little concern about how their family life will be negatively affected.”

I ask Seijou if he thinks he will continue the tradition with his children. (An eldest daughter is traditionally able to play the *chonnan* role if there are no sons.)

“You must be bloody joking! I myself have suffered too long from the bind of family responsibility to have any desire to continue it. Not that I want to see family values go down the tube – don’t get me wrong – but imposing constraints on the way that my children choose to live their lives is not my idea of being a good parent.”

He pauses briefly, takes a cigarette from the pack in front of him and lights it. Children play outside the first floor window and it seems, from the screams, that they have seen a snake. Seijou smiles his acknowledgment of the activity between his first breath-in and his quick exhalation.

“My two daughters are going to ballet tonight. My wife takes them. Naomi is quite good, it seems – bit of a natural – didn’t get it from me.” He chuckles and glances at the window, squinting to shield his eyes from the bright sunlight. “The world will be different for them. We – my generation – will be the last to suffer the constraints of elderly people with old values. Well, at least that is how I see it. That is at least what I want to happen – for them to be free – or freer – than I have been. I think they will be.

Yeah I think so.”

Seeking mobility

As we have seen in the last part, history, the sort of which peoples’ identities are made, is contained in the characters, values and stories with which we become familiar, and in which we invest. Here, with Seijou, then, we move in not just to look at the particular

ways in which people have negotiated their positions vis-à-vis the familial values which surround them, but also how through these negotiations, Japanese people have drawn upon, and been influenced by, shifting nation-wide pressures and opportunities presented to them through recent modern history as a cultural collective.

In Seijou we begin to see how powerful a hold local social sanctions and memberships have over the lifecourse, and the particular ways Seijou deals with these constraints as an individual within the microstructure of the Japanese social system. In some ways he is particular, even exceptional (being beaten by one's wife is hardly common), and yet his negotiation between the values of the previous generation and those available in his immediate present illustrate some much more general movements in structuring and dealing with Japanese familial life.

Of course, in Seijou's case, the word 'negotiation' implies rather more freedom to control the direction of a life course than he has had. Seijou's world is first and foremost a world where negotiation exists not as a socially acknowledged practice but as a personal, emotive enterprise. As he encounters the boundaries of his mobility so his ideas and way of life need to be contracted to fit the values contained within. Thus his

personal ambitions have constantly needed to be opposed and almost always discarded for the preservation and maintenance of his family and his community relations.

It is perhaps in the restrictions of the human condition and in situations where mobility is ultimately limited that people seek out temporary ways of experiencing a sense of unity and solidarity; values which allow for at least the freedoms that go with support and understanding. Seijou finds these social safe houses – the refuge from his immobility - in the people he visits on his rounds. Time with them both frees him of the immediate need to be concerned with his family life and its direction – they will support the idea that there is very little he can do about it and that ‘that is the way things are’ (see Long 1999). These visits give him a social membership and identity on which he can draw for a sense of comfort and consolidation.

So while Seijou’s life is held hostage by the norms and values of a world that he actively maintains, he remembers his mother, who, while a maintainer of the social system, was somehow beyond its reach. Thus he celebrates those who can find a way out of it. Here we see that although immobility comes to be seen as inevitable and that social sanctions may well be imposed on those who don’t play by the rules, escape from the very system which is being maintained is sought in the dreams and heroes that the

social system produces¹⁵. I will return in the last part to this apparent contradiction, but for the moment let us see Seijou as wedged in a suspended position between the crushing values of the previous generation. He cannot find any way to escape their pressure on him except through his meta-commentary upon them with those who will listen.

There is, however, a very important way in which Seijou is actively negotiating a way out of his immobility. He is, in fact, ‘secretly’ going about destroying key parts of the very system he helps to uphold. But these plans and negotiations are not ways in which he is hoping to alter the life course for himself or others in the present. Having taken a good look around at his circumstances and the others for whom he has responsibility, he has decided that the only way to ‘move’ is to negotiate a future where he will be in control of the values that are taken on; the world he is creating for his daughters.

“I will never – nor will my wife, for we have talked about it – impose conditions on their membership to our family,” he told me on a different occasion.

¹⁵ See Buruma 1995 for a full discussion on Japan’s heroes and their many characteristics.

Part of the change he is trying to achieve is a separation from the values taught to children by the older members of the surrounding familial groups. He feels that social sanctions can have no effect if the bonds between the individual concerned and the community are cut. This can happen more easily in a family whose borders are clearly defined as separate from others in the community. In order to achieve this separation, Seijou and his wife have engineered several ways of involving his daughters in both family activities and clubs outside the traditional community. A camper van allows them to set off as a family (mercifully without the father as he is too ill) into the mountains whenever Seijou has any free time, and the ballet sessions (in the city of Kurume) further demonstrate how these parents attempt to give their daughters access to worlds that they have not known.

Although we see some of the techniques that the Seijou's are using to induce a mobility in the next generation¹⁶, to understand fully what is taking place here – to familiarize ourselves with the circumstances so that we may determine how these techniques work in the larger context of Japanese social relations – we need to take another step into the world in which they find themselves. For while in one's own respective social system it

¹⁶ Self sacrifice is obviously a key component of these efforts and there are Japanese cultural models available which demonstrate that such sacrifice is more appropriate than resistance. See Ackermann 2003.

may be obvious why someone is doing something to improve the freedoms and opportunities of the next generation, it may not be so apparent in systems less familiar. Let us seek to understand where the Seijous come from and what exactly they are up to. In order to do this we need to understand what life was like for their parents and how the Japanese family system has unfolded throughout recent history.

The intertwining of family and community systems in Japan

If Seijou had lived three generations before his father's – in his great great grandfather's time - he may well never have found himself in his present predicament (although, of course, he would never have had the same opportunities). In the Japan that evolved out of the well organized, one thousand year-old agricultural communities – by 1850, being a peasant represented 80% of the population - there was little in the way of a common, widely practised system of family renewal and responsibility (Yoshino, 1992, Fukutake, 1967). Like all areas of the world that were hugely dependent on agriculture – and particularly wet-rice cultivation that needed effective irrigation - Japanese agricultural life was hugely co-operative; so much so that families (as we imagine see them today –

independent reproducing units) were intertwined in with the local village systems and organizations which collectively sustained the population (Hunter, 1989; Dore, 1967).

In some areas of Japan, children were the responsibility of many different sectors of the village – the young persons' group and school, for example – rather than the sole 'property' of their immediate family (Hunter, 1989).

“It is not coincidental that the family and the traditional community flourished in the same soil for so long. Both were held in fixed geographical and social space; both shared a loyalty to common values and standards of behaviour that fostered a homogeneous perspective... The family nourished the child's public development, teaching the young to accept those responsibilities imperative for communal functioning.” (Scherer, 1972:79)

Up until 1868 (the year of the Meiji Emperor's restoration and the beginnings of united efforts to modernize Japan), and in the few decades beyond, the agricultural communities' way of life was highly diverse, according to region and co-operative. Its tying together of the family and community structures gave it its cohesion (Fukutake, 1967; Kumagai, 1996). This co-operative way of life was at the time quite resilient to change – its ability to deal with diversity and different inheritance patterns allowed it to

continue through subsequent generations without needing significant alterations¹⁷. This resilient nature was, however, to succumb slowly to a period of significant social change.

Although contemporary Japan cannot be understood without seeing that the family and community were/are social bedfellows (Hunter, 1989), the way of life that is generally seen now is not a direct descendant of that which existed for Seijou's great great grandfather. The co-operative structures which exist today are mirror images of those that had evolved as part of a people's repertoire of adaptations to environment.

Somewhere between Seijou's not-too-distant relatives and Seijou's world there were several key changes that affected that way of life and the social structures it carried with it. And we need to understand what these transitions were about, for they have a direct bearing on what Seijou and his family are experiencing now, in their negotiation of what it means to be a husband, a wife, two children and an elderly pain in the rear-end.

¹⁷ From time to time significant economic restraints were put upon agricultural communities that did affect their ability to function cohesively. See Hane 1982.

Modernity's first children and the beginnings of a culture of design

The changes began, not as a result of the deliberate actions of political leaders, but through the accumulation of wealth by various members of the 'lower' classes (including many farmers themselves). In a somewhat surprising inversion of some of the established principles of a free market economy, the policy of national seclusion (*sakoku*) as well as rules which determined the domestic movements of the wealthy higher classes throughout the country on a regular basis, a relatively vibrant merchant economy had begun to flourish in Japan¹⁸ by 1868. The Samurai class, as well as the whole political world which supported it, was gradually becoming ineffective at maintaining the status-quo since farmers and merchants were becoming richer than their supposed masters (some of whom were themselves lapsing into poverty). Thus from the seventeenth century onwards, the Japanese regime became an increasingly competitive mix of decentralized feudalism and centralized monarchy (Strayer, 1968). The resultant economic imbalances threatened the entire status-based premise regime, and eventually, by the mid-nineteenth century, had thrown the hierarchical and political

¹⁸ By preventing larger scale colonialism and the import of European weapons, domestic conflicts were curtailed by *sakoku* and peace brought considerable economic and cultural development. The system of 'alternate attendance' shifted wealth up and down the country encouraging merchant class economies to flourish. See again Strayer 1968, and Waswo 1996.

structures that underpinned it into disarray. With the resultant ‘opening’ of Japan to the outside world, partly due to the arrival of Commodore Perry, but also largely an inevitable outcome of the changing economic situation, the political leaders attempted to modernize this predominantly agricultural society, to ‘bring it into line’ with the other nations of the industrial world.

In 1868 the ‘Meiji’ government leaders took on the task of Japan’s modernization, and in so doing ‘inherited’ a quite diverse set of peoples and social systems. Again, family systems alone were strongly characteristic of their locality and diverse according to class (Dore, 1958). (Certainly, as farmers became richer they needed to pass on land and property through their families, and so they often acquired the Samurai *ie* system to allow them to do this). The Tokugawa regime, 1603-1867, could function to some degree with this internal diversity because it was hierarchical in nature and uninterested in the unification of social systems. But with a manifesto for modernization now in focus, the monitoring, control and regulation of social systems became key aims. These were aims which were to be achieved beyond all expectations, exposing generations to designs on determining their familial way of life, and positioning Seijou in my living room over one hundred and thirty years later, lamenting on his difficult father while drinking tea on a summer’s afternoon.

These designs on the family system reflected a common concern: to bring together the diverse variety of community and social systems – to make people start to feel as if they were part of one shared way of life and country. This was the beginning of Japan's quest to modernize the imaginations and the familial social realities of its people. The political changes of 1868, the beginning of the Meiji era and the start of Japan's concerted moves towards heavy industrialization and modernization, brought 'rules' about what a family should be about and what kind of relationship it should have with the outside world. Those in positions of political influence saw that in order to begin to unite a people in a solidarity of purpose and identity they would need to bring them together at the most fundamental level of social existence - to give their family systems a legally defined equality of status and structure. Perhaps at no other time in the history of nation-building has a country been created so effectively and with such sophisticated design concepts. In no small part, the creation of a nationally 'sanctified' family structure allowed that nation to become a reality within a generation (Yoshino, 1992).

The family system which was to be disseminated throughout Japan was, it was decided, the six hundred year-old Samurai *ie* system (Fukutake, 1967). It is hardly surprising that this was so, since the Samurai and affluent farmers and landowners were the ones

who gained positions of bureaucratic power in the new government and began making the major society-shaping decisions. The Samurai's rather inflated system of loyalty to ancestors and devotion to continuing the household through eldest son inheritance was perfectly suited to the pre-modern feudal era. Indeed, it had evolved in response to the political, economic and social changes at the top rungs of Japanese 'society' for centuries. Removed in principle from a need to function co-operatively on the local community (production) level, the Samurai family system re-enforced 'households' (*ies*), which could provide basic bureaucratic support to systems and people further up the ladder of power, as well as manage the administration of the agricultural communities and local political organizations.

Despite the glaring disparity of pedigree between the more flexible, co-operative and representative family systems of the (poorest) agricultural communities, and the strictly ordered, specialist and restrictive nature of the Samurai family structure, the latter was selected to replace the former in bringing the people together as a nation. A popular view is that this was because the Samurai family system stressed loyalty in the notion of filial piety. Thus, one of the Meiji administration's nation-building techniques came to be the involvement of their people in the idea that Japan was one big family, with the

emperor as head. The *ie* system was possibly seen as the perfect tool for achieving that goal (Yoshino, 1992).

It is irrelevant to this examination whether the powers-that-were conceived their whole strategy of nation building at once and therefore disseminated the *ie* system, or whether it was a first step in modernization that came to be its most effective instrument in subsequent nation building efforts. Instead, we are concerned with the fact that it was the *ie* which came to represent and bind the first children of Japan's modernity together in a solidarity of inheritance for at least the next century, and what that meant for the conceptual evolution of what it meant to be part of a Japanese family – and as we shall see, consequently, the Japanese nation.

The *ie* system

The *ie* system works in very different ways from nuclear family units. First and foremost, as its Samurai, basically aristocratic, roots would attest, it is about continuation of the family line through the generations, with more regard for the 'house' as a whole than for the individual members. In this way the *ie* has been seen to

correspond to the English concept of house, as in 'The House of Windsor' (Fukutake, 1972; Hendry, 1987). Interestingly, although not surprisingly for a system stressing continuation through the generations, the *ie* system places considerable emphasis on ancestors and descendants, almost over that of the living members. Ancestors are revered, and rites for the recently deceased attempt to secure their well-being and afford them security in the after-life. In addition, *houjis*, ceremonies which mark particular periods after the death of a prominent *ie* member and occur at regular anniversaries of the death, are a chance to bring any non-resident *ie* members to help bind the 'family' together around one of its many spiritual centre-points.

The *ie*'s provision of a highly spiritual dimension to its existence and membership helps to identify its two most distinctive and functional characteristics. Firstly, the notion that the *ie* continues through time and exists in spiritual space as well as geographical location gives it a permanence - a sense of transcendental membership and status in the local community setting. The *ie* has a particular status and profile because it exists as a product, and is representative of members who may have had a variety of occupations, (or perhaps even more powerfully, would have a history and tradition in one alone) throughout the history of the community. This larger-than-life heritage has the effect of forming the necessary conditions for social control and/or direction. One is far less

likely to ‘go off the rails’ if the laws are seen to represent groups of individuals taught to respect and identify without resentment. This would have worked well to keep young Samurai away from distraction and make them feel part of an expanded heritage.

Secondly, the spiritual dimension of the *ie* hands a meta-physical as well as fully grounded set of responsibilities to whomever is deemed to be its head. It lends a great deal of respect and power to the head’s position that one is in charge of running a household so encompassing in its scope as to include responsibilities for the good names of departed ancestors¹⁹. Although the head could delegate duties to the other members, he has been ultimately responsible – legally as well as socially - for the running of the *ie* and the conduct of its members. To suit such a position of responsibility, the head of an *ie* has been treated with according respect: taking the most important place at the table, being served the best food, and being the first to bathe etc. The position has required, however, a serious and responsible attitude, and if a particular head seems unable to fulfil the required role and duties, there have been various ways in which he could be superseded (Hendry, 1981).

¹⁹ Here again the Samurai pedigree of the *ie* is seen clearly in its hierarchical structure and emphasis on leadership.

Membership of the *ie* has been primarily decided by kinship relations. And this is where we find the inheritance system which still affects many people today – that of passing the house through successors, *chonnan*, or eldest sons. While, as I have mentioned, the pre-modern agricultural classes had more diverse and flexible systems of inheritance and more egalitarian, co-operative family/community structures, the Samurai *ie* system was ‘hierarchical-vertical’ with, traditionally, only eldest sons being permitted to continue the family line. From some time before, though, farmers and merchants who had taken on the *ie* system themselves had used more flexible inheritance systems which are common today. The hierarchical nature of the *ie* was given much of its ‘concreteness’ not only through the presence of the head, but also, importantly, through its successor, who was given deferential treatment by the other members who were effectively subordinates.

Thus the *ie* has traditionally acted as a training camp for internal and external status relations, social etiquette, particular occupational development and (in the case of heads and successors) group management and decision making. It has not been an emotionally supportive, loving base of close relations. (That marriage – both in concept and practice – has changed so much in recent decades illustrates some key changes in the conceptualization of the *ie* as a family unit (Hendry, 1981)). This ‘training camp’

system was given weight at the point when it was disseminated to the general 'Japanese' population. Perhaps because the political leaders thought that the lack of discipline of the 'lower' classes would result in the system being only partially adopted, or perhaps just because they wanted to seal the whole unit with an extra layer of conceptual wrapping (a Japanese cultural characteristic if ever there was one – see Hendry, 1992), they bound it with a layer of identity-inducing moral prescription – Confucian ideals.

Confucian scholars attempted to make concrete the idea of the family existing as an integral part of the state machinery by drawing parallels between the two entities with the aid of two of the faith's main moral principles: loyalty and filial piety. Loyalty to the emperor came to represent devotion to one's family, the logic being that the state was constructed from many individual family 'cells', and that the emperor presided over all of these mini-families – the head of the state, and by extension, the national family. Thus, to adhere to the moral principles being trumpeted at the time, one would have received the message that you were first and foremost to show deference and respect to your parents, to be loyal to them, and through the same familial system, understand your place as a member – loyal servant - of the larger state (Yoshino, 1992).

The *ie* system just outlined was disseminated throughout Japan from the Meiji revolution onwards with some inheritance modifications. And in 1890, it truly became an effective part of the nation-building machinery of the administration. With the Imperial Rescript on Education issued in this year and disseminated through the new schooling system, and with the moral codes determined by Confucian scholars soon to follow, every child learnt that one's loyalty was to the *ie*, second only to loyalty to the emperor – the head of the national 'family'. As we shall see later, this engineered connection would alter the course of Japanese - and world - history for the coming century and beyond.

Seijou's father

By the very time Seijou's father arrives on the scene, two full generations have passed since these influential changes. The social structures that have survived the immediate effects of the Meiji restoration and those imposed by the Meiji political designers exist largely side-by-side. This cocktail of influences form Seijou's father's world and the sanctions that are put on family and community membership make up the norms that inhabit it. To give a flavour of how traditional pre-Meiji elements and those imposed

through and from the Meiji administration were working together at a time when Seijou's father would have been a young man, I include some brief extracts about life in Suye Mura, a village in Kyushu where anthropologist John Embree and his wife, Ella Wiswell, were doing fieldwork in 1935. Although the period fell a good seventy years after the Meiji restoration, we can see that many pre-Meiji social structures remain, and as new 'Meiji' values are implemented, the social sphere is altered in countless ways. Imagine, if you will, John Embree, an American anthropologist, crouched over a old typewriter, tapping his observations of these changes going on around him as, somewhere not very far away, Seijou's father lives as a twenty year old:

The basic pattern of life in Suye is evidently an old one. It has survived a long and varied history and probably dates back at least to the time of the introduction of Chinese civilization in the sixth century... The basic social structures are the household and *buraku*; the fundamental economic systems, based on rice, are the many co-operative and mutual-aid arrangements within the household and between households within the *buraku*...Connected with the co-operative systems, indeed at the bottom of most of them, is the principle of reciprocity – some return must be made for any gift or favor or

service received... An important social sanction consists of withholding co-operation.

The effects of the Meiji revolution... are present, however, and many changes are taking place. (These changes are) of two kinds: those affecting the internal relations of household, *kumi*, and *buraku* and those affecting the external relations of the *mura* (village) and people in it to the environment, i.e. nearby towns, Hitoyoshi, the country as a whole, and the nation...

As the government controlled systems such as schools, national societies, and the agricultural association come into the *mura*... the local forms start to break down...

New social classes, based on money and occupation, have grown up in the *mura* as a whole to replace the older geographical *buraku* units and the governing classes of *Samurai* and feudal lord. This reshuffling of social classes has brought in its train new strains and dis-functional situations...

The old *mura* system was based on rice and co-operation. Any changes which affect these things affect seriously the whole social structure. As money comes in, co-operation goes out. The breakdown of the co-operation of the shopkeeper *buraku* in contrast to the paddy *buraku*... richer farmers resorting to contract labor...

(Also) whereas, formerly neither the farmer nor the government was ever much worried about such an abstraction as patriotism so long as the farmer produced his rice, today, as a powerful tool of social control, nationalism is stressed in education, in conscription, in public talks... and in the encouragement of societies...

(Embree 1939: 301-304)

Negotiating family and community

In pre-war rural Japan, people were experiencing a wave of hugely significant social change. As Embree observes, these changes were often related to the readily observable

forces of industrialization and modernization – such as the influx of money, which did--and still does--cause similar social transitions in many countries around the world (Berdichewsky, 1979; Lopreato, 1967). However, it is the particular way in which these changes affected the composition of the family, its need to provide mobility to the next generation and its relationship with the social structures of the community which is most prominent in Japan.

Embree points out that as local-level social structures became more embedded in the aims of a wider national and cultural remit, the very co-operative base which had given them coherence began to disintegrate. Along with this upheaval of social relations – their re-configuration to the ‘measurements’ of class and money – came the ability directly to associate with the wider notions of Japanese culture and nation through the maintenance of and loyalty to the *ie* system. I suggest that it was the fact that these socio-economic changes coincided with a fundamental need to reinterpret these familial systems vis-à-vis the collective identity, that brought the Seijous to where they are now.

In order to develop this idea further, let us imagine that as a member of the majority agricultural classes of this time, mobility (of any sort) had perhaps – in our parents’ or

grandparents' generation – never been much of an option²⁰. Perhaps, indeed, in successful communities working co-operatively, mobility was not even a valued commodity. This is all beginning to change, as money becomes more and more valued. Along with the very visible changes going on around us – affecting our relationships with all our fellow members – come some less tangible clues as to how we can gain a stake in the 'new' society growing up all about us.

With the various social meetings, the new trumpeting of education to the tune of patriotism, and the idea that we are becoming part of an expanded world of common culture and nation comes a corresponding need to blend into these new landmarks so that we may survive and grow socially with others. In order to maximize our chances of gaining entry to these new collectives, it would be necessary to align ourselves not just with the dialogue of nationalism, but as a tool to bring about such collective membership, to ensuring our family system was brought into line with its precedents – to set our doing in line with our imagining²¹.

²⁰ It was 'illegal' during much of the Tokugawa era to travel even outside one's local province.

²¹ See Part One's discussion on the hermeneutic circle and Geertz 1983.

In this flux of changing meanings and identities, then, we can picture young people like Seijou's father re-orientating themselves to the family, their place in their communities and their new status as members of the Japanese culture and nation. In all kinds of ways these re-orientations would have strengthened the resolve to create continuity between familial and collective experience and interpretation – efforts which the wider national dialogue was formally assisting through their unilateral nation-building efforts.

To move from a predominately co-operative attitude to family and community affairs towards a hierarchical-vertical interpretation of what the family was about in the wider context of the nation-state was, then, to pursue mobility – to connect with the emerging landmarks and collectives of the time. In this way, heads (or future heads) of *ies* would have felt a need to enforce their authority, to re-enforce the very social unit that ultimately gave meaning to these new notions of nation, and, by extension, increased mobility (see also Kumagai, 1996). To put the point more strongly: to link the family to the nation was not, in the minds of Seijou's father's generation, only a theoretical linkage, but a political and social survival strategy in a world fast responding to an intense social, economic and imaginative modernization²².

²² Ochiai (1994) sees this stage of the development of the Japanese family as mirroring the transitions Europe faced in the 19th century. Class and mobility played a particularly

A new approach to managing the family unit and to rendering it an integral part of the machinery of nation building now involved a previously non-agenda-minded co-operative and agricultural people²³. And it was this combination -- of an agenda for the integration of the small-scale familial and large-scale collective membership, with a people unused and unpractised in contesting such scales of identity and power – which placed *ie* heads unwittingly in their (often) new found roles of dominance and control.

...the head of the *ie* (came to have) considerable power over the members, and the national government and local community lent support to this power, enabling him effectively to control and supervise the activities of its members. (Vogel, in Dore, 1967)

Could it be that new *ie* heads – unused to the feelings that came with this new local status and power, and the pride of being incorporated into the fantastical narratives of Japan's national sovereignty considered a 'citizen' – became somewhat obsessed and

important role: as workers' families became increasingly dissatisfied with not being able to offer a stable environment for their children, so they increasingly took on the family systems and practices of the higher classes and 'bought in' to the corresponding ideologies.

²³ I follow Zeldin (1994) in feeling it is important to tell the history of the majority.

competitive in maintaining their positions? Were Japan's first children of modernity simply too 'young' to know how to manage their new-found power and identity²⁴? This, perhaps, is a tentative explanation as to why we find Seijou's and Kora's fathers to be hardened men, set in their ways and unable to provide any 'space' for mobility, change or modification of established social systems in the next generation.

For this older generation, the familial system had attached itself to a particular understanding of its place in a wider collective agenda and narrative. This self-fulfilling connection was to become ever more entrenched as further efforts were made to pursue a sense of place in the local and national system. We can suggest that mobility for Seijou's father's generation was represented through binding himself and his family firmly to the new 'modernizing' structures of his world²⁵. The landmarks to which he would have aligned himself would have been supportive in attempting to integrate these complex social changes into a fundamentally feudal familial way of life. In aligning himself with modernity, conversely, Seijou's father would have pulled some of the key strands of pre-modern life into his modern identity. This is but one example

²⁴ Children are often overwhelmed by sudden responsibilities that come with new-found power – see Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1997).

²⁵ Perhaps illustrating that the modernization of Japanese society was to do with extending its *gemeinschaft* quality (see Kumagai 1996).

of how Japan's first children of modernity were encased in mind-sets drawn from the pre-industrial era, made contemporary (see Kumagai 1996).

For Seijou's father and for many of his class and generation, the setting of family ties into the clay of national rhetoric and discourse reflected a need both to 'move with the times' (acquire social and imaginative mobility), and to pursue what was perhaps, for many, a new conceptual opportunity – the expansion of one's sense of social place to include cultural and national canvases of expression. The family *ie* system was, as we have seen it described, a training camp for various human qualities and virtues rather than an emotionally supportive unit and this again suggests the steadfastness of Seijou's father's generational values and perceptions with regard the 'new' and now 'established' status quo.

This system of thought, then, began to penetrate and permeate the very structure of the family, bolting it to a particular interpretation of the nation-state, and occupying the very formation of identity through prescribing the precise local detail and global structure of life²⁶. This 'occupation' left the succeeding generation with a pre-determined legacy of narrative example and social circumstance. And it is through this

²⁶ See Part One for a discussion on the 'circular' nature of identity formation.

information that we can perhaps understand how Seijou's life is constricted by the bonds of his parents' generation, and yet at the same time watch him attempting to negotiate a sense of mobility for himself and his family.

For the Seijous, the next generation, their social heritage not only represented the limits of their received mobility, but also presented them with serious complications: if their world was to suffer any significant change on any social level, they would not only need to re-orientate their positions vis-à-vis the established identity cascades of their forebears, but in so doing find a way to dismantle the very blueprint of its design so that they would be free to move beyond its all-encompassing imaginative hold.

Of course there were more changes to come, changes that would again throw these linkages between the familial and collective into disarray and leave their social world at odds with the one which went before. Seijou's generation would need to dismantle the previous status-quo while maintaining their inter-generational relations and providing the potential for mobility in their own, and the next, generation. Not an easy task, but one that we have now seen in motion in Seijou's world and in the one he wants to create for his daughters. Seijou's position is stuck in the middle of a transition in the concept of mobility – from using the family to enhance an all-encompassing relationship with

the community, culture and nation, to dismantling the family from its community-setting so as to allow social mobility for the next generation. The conflicts of his position become clearer now that we understand the circumstances and nature of the change in the concept of mobility in his father's generation.

Uncoupling identities: the Seijous and their mission

Considering the incredible influence that the Meiji restoration had on the agricultural communities of early-mid 19th century Japan, I suggest it is inevitable that Seijou's generation will have been affected greatly by the conclusions and structures designed and implemented by their parents' generation. As I have explored, the Seijou's family structures have been linked to a particular collective conception of nation, and contemporary Japanese society has found this a limitation on social and imaginative mobility. Consequently, the drive for a sense of mobility is pursued through separating the threads of these collectives from one another.

In this way, the fundamental nature and interpretation of social mobility has changed over this generational borderline. And indeed, so evident is this change that the

connections between the family and community must be dismantled so as to re-animate the family unit and make it an effective, supportive base for new generations to choose and negotiate their subsequent life courses.

But just as we needed that background to understand part of the puzzle of what the Seijous are up to, so we now need to focus on the changes that Seijou's generation went through in order to further our understanding of why this was necessary. What happened in the course of social life between Seijou's father's generation and Seijou's that would call for these familial systems and identities to need an overhaul? We can see how it doesn't suit Seijou and his family now – but why not? What is it about the Seijous' world that put it at such odds with their previous generation, and resulted in the need for them to reject its key precedents?

The decline of imperial designs on identity

In an introductory history of Japan (Waswo, 1996), we are told that one of the crudest ways to categorize Japanese history is to use the end of the Second World War as a great dividing point in the configuration of society. I agree wholeheartedly with Waswo

on this point since history is made up of countless overlapping narratives and events combining to create a consistency of human interaction through time. That is, however, as far as my sympathy for the avocation of ‘acknowledging the complex’ goes with regard the outcome of World War Two on the minds of the Japanese.

For we, in Japan’s case, are talking about a war which involved millions of previously peaceful non-warring agricultural communities, by taking over the very ways these people saw themselves connected to the social worlds around them. Wrapped up in the pursuit of opportunity and mobility, and with little or nothing to gain from dismantling themselves from the new social order of the time, the Japanese people fought hard to protect what they had only just been given a taste of – a sense of familial security and collective cultural and national identity – the passports to a more liberated and privileged existence.

It is a view taken by an acclaimed documentary series - *The World at War* – undertaken by the BBC co-operation with NHK (the BBC equivalent in Japan). The series focuses upon the mind set of Japanese soldiers during the War years, concluding that it was the efforts of the nation builders of time to solidify the link between family and nation (through loyalty to emperor as a unifying symbol) which resulted in some of the

terrifying actions and responses during this conflict. In one of the documentary's last episodes, film footage of Japanese mothers jumping from cliffs with their children in their arms in the fear that their imminent capture would result in torture and death – a lie which was very much part of Japan War-time propaganda – illustrates the extent to which some Japanese understandings of the world were entirely directed by the designers and upholders of the nation state.

The Second World War demonstrated the way in which the family system had come to exist as a unit contributing to, and at the mercy of, the national collective. A sort of local and global 'conceptual closure' was at work in the most extreme form. For those participating in the war itself, the interplay between the local and global detail of their lives would have been even more overpowering. Not only was the concrete day to day sociality a brutal regime centered around death and suffering, but the abstract collective imagination was bolted to it unmovingly, reinforcing every human link from one's relationship with one's wife at home to one's colonel on the battlefield.

This pre-war occupation of the Japanese identity by imperialist ideology did, of course, have its opponents, but they found it hard to oust its influence from that most personal of social environments – the family. As Naka neatly points out:

Of course, even at the time, there were not a few young people among those strongly influenced by modern ideas from the West and by Christianity who either rejected existing totalitarian authority – the patriarchal family system... the emperor system – or were deeply troubled by it. Nevertheless, within themselves, the very values that they wanted to reject were firmly entrenched, in association with the family system and the authoritarian machinery of the state. (1977: 10)

Defeat and occupation in World War Two brought with it a sudden transformation.

Sweeping reforms were introduced which promised drastically to alter the parts of the civil code relating to marriage and the family. Not only did the *ie* system cease to be legally recognized, but so did the position of househead and all the powers that it enabled. The whole family system was effectively ‘officially’ restructured from a concern with linking the individual to the State to promoting ‘individual dignity and the essential equality of the sexes’ (Civil Code Article 24. See also Dore, 1958).

Prewar efforts further to ensure children linked their families with their nation through education, were reversed. Until new materials were produced “our textbooks were

heavily censured. Anything that had to do with the divinity of the Emperor or about Japan's militarism was cut out. But pretty soon we all got new textbooks, and we began studying about democracy" (Japanese man 76 years). These and other changes immediately following defeat in the Second World War "brought about a collapse of established ideological systems, and pluralized young people's value concepts, relativising ideas and creeds" (Naka, 1977: 10).

A huge proportion of people decided that State induced and collective acceptance of any form of status quo was not for them. Compare the answers to pre-war questionnaires set by the Government to young people with their post-war equivalents and we see a "striking difference, in that while young people before the war had, in principle, at least, a group-orientated attitude to life, their post-war successors have individual-orientated life targets" (Naka, 1977: 11). In all kinds of ways, defeat in World War Two had driven a wedge between two generational understandings of local and national identity. And it was a challenge to the family in the context of its community – the institutional link that united these two levels of identity – which became the transition's most salient feature.

It is no exaggeration to say that... the war (brought) a direct challenge to the uniquely Japanese *ie* system and its long traditions. Of course, legal change did not immediately mean a change in reality, and as a social custom the *ie* system lives on today. But the change in the legally embodied system of values relating to the family could not fail to have an effect on the reality of family life... sense of family 'status'... (and) the importance... of 'the family's place in the village'.

(Fukutake, 1989:126)

The degree to which the accepted norms of self identification had ruptured over the pre and post war generation was substantial and far reaching since to accept that the emperor was not head of a state family was also to see the entire identity package as corrupt and invalid. For those who had subscribed to the theory, fought and perhaps suffered terribly in its name, the occupation of Japan presented one of two options: to 'keep up' the imperial identity by burying oneself further into the recesses of an emotional nationalism and dogma—or to expose the manufactured nature of the imperial familial and collective concepts, and by so doing, open the possibilities for understanding and re-evaluation. As we will see throughout the remainder of this

examination, pre and post-war generations are to some extent still deciding in which camp to base their collective imaginations²⁷.

Other impediments to the design of Japan's imaginative modernity²⁸

We may see the outcome of World War Two as impeding the imperial design of the familial and collective Japanese sense of self. However, Waswo suggests that do so would be to deny some other factors contributing to a need for a generation to begin the unpacking and re-evaluation of Japanese identity and family structure vis-à-vis the previous generation.

Briefly, then, we can see that increasing industrialization had meant that migration to cities in Japan was very steady over many decades up until the time of the World War (Taeuber, 1957). Far from being a sudden change, then, sons were pulled out of the *ie* by steady socio-economic forces which began to dilute the influence of the *ie* system,

²⁷ See Barshay, (1998) on how a post-war 'collective repentance' has influenced social thought into the present day.

²⁸ See McCormack, (1996) for further discussion of Japan's 'deep' impediments.

putting them in to more nuclear configurations of family life, previously the province of the minority upper middle classes (Ochiai, 1994).

In addition, the sheer number of siblings born into post-war *ie* families gives a demographic explanation for the turn away from the extended family system and a corresponding increase in nuclear families. Since under the stem *ie* system only one son was required to continue the family line, additional children would have left the *ie* to establish their own branch families and thus contributed to the large post-war demographic trend towards nuclearisation²⁹.

Whether or not we chose to separate these demographic factors from the emotive/imaginative elements discussed in the last section—the direct results of defeat and occupation from the longer-term transitions—it is clear that the post-war generation (the baby boomers) were now growing up in a very different type of society. Far from a sense of mobility being derived from attaching themselves to a continuous line of identification from the family to the nation, the emphasis became placed on independence, on self-determination, and of separation from inherited social systems

²⁹ A large post-war “baby-boom” increased the population and further diluted the established *ies*.

and identities. Not only did the “members of nuclear families like their newfound freedom from the confines of the *ie* system” (Ochiai, 1994: 63), but as we have seen in the Seijous’ example, freedom from family and community obligations for many of this generation became a defining paradigm of mind and action.

There is little doubt that the combination of the desire for greater independence, the need for a reevaluation of the national historical narrative, and a variety of demographic forces contributed to the post-war generation’s need to dismantle themselves from the social constraining aspects of the *ie*. This desire for a level of independence – as an adaptation to the unfolding complexity and anomie in society *not* as influence of ‘westernization’ – see Hendry, (1981) – began really to challenge the previous imaginative connections that had been made between the family, community and nation.

As we have seen, the Seijous have been working hard to remake their family unit as a collective defined largely through opposition to a family structure which incorporated the workings of community – and by extension the nation – into its conceptual framework. In doing so, they reflect the need for the ‘post-war’ family system to gain new freedoms and for a generation to withdraw “into a shell of home and family

centered life (with) comparatively little contact with the surrounding community”
(Ochiai, 1994:83).

The fact that Japan’s first modern family system was essentially a bastardized pre-industrial model for structuring familial relations presented real problems for a generation attempting to come to terms with the increasing opportunities and desires for independence which post-war industrialization brought in its wake. If for the previous prewar generation it was necessary to root themselves in this “modern” system, aligning it with an imperial nation state, then the post-war generation would have to dismantle both the local and global manifestations of its existence in order to place themselves in an expanded social reality that did away with some of the resulting restrictions. Thus again we see the conception of social and imaginative mobility beginning to alter over a generational borderline – mobility now being about separation from the old – and the corresponding need to fuse with these new opportunities for independence coming to form a new generationally contextual agenda for social change.

We have seen, in Seijou, how these attempts to provide themselves with a world that worked on the principles of this new mobility have become represented in the intimate struggles of this generation to find an expanded sense of their own existence vis-à-vis

their elders. There are other members of this generation who have been far more successful than the Seijous in achieving this, and they are typical of this generational movement (see Sakurai, 2003). More than 50% of the baby-boomers in the community of *yon-gumi* (see next section, community) had moved out of the orbit of familial obligations entirely.

But let me now turn now to exploring the effects of these generational transitions on the composure of contemporary Japanese society and, particularly, on the emergence of a new generation of young people who perhaps feel distanced from these historical patterns of change in the familial structure and collective Japanese identity. One of the questions I am interested in answering here is: In rejecting the very narratives that came from the pre-Meiji, prewar Japan—those wrapped-up in the first ‘modern’ family system of their parents—have the baby-boomers also rejected key components of harmonious social existence? It is an accusation that we have seen Kora make of the young – that they have their own ways of life and do not respect others. Is it perhaps in the rejection of the previous generation’s identity package that the baby boomers (the Seijous and others like them) discarded key social structures related to successful local-level interaction, leaving their children’s world empty of all but the most nuclear of support structures?



Moto lifted himself off the bar stool, a glass of beer and a lit cigarette in one hand, and moved over to the large studio window which separated us from the black mountainous beyond. As he stood, taking in both his own reflection and what lay beyond, he remarked,

“You know, I think it’s about what you’re used to... this generational thing... I mean, Kora, you grew up in a very different world from the one where young people are growing up in today. Some people just don’t understand the society that you have an affinity with. They see it, but there is nothing in their every day lives that makes *understanding or living by its rules* necessary or relevant. Their problems are different, their needs and their visions of life too.

Now, I agree with you that is a real shame that this seems to have gone so far – that young people seem to have rejected many of the values of that life which are still important, still necessary for people to live comfortably together. But what can one do about that? It’s a bit of a hopeless cause. People are people.”

Kora nodded in an empathic confederation of pessimism. But Moto's words had struck a more positive chord with me, making me think of a young couple that I knew. This couple had spoken to me at length about what it was like to grow up in a generation where there had been a concerted effort by the preceding one to sever the ties of the family and community.

The Takayamas

"It's not so much the fact that Japanese of our generation *reject* the ways of thinking we have seen," said Takeshi Takayama from across a frying hot plate of chopped sirloin, "but rather that we feel that certain things need *modifying*." His wife, Hiroko, nodded empathetically, spooning a dollop of *yakiniku* sauce into a small bowl in front of her.

"Yes," she said, "like when Takeshi and I were at university together, we would often see our class mates – who had been abroad in America or wherever, come back and begin to act in the most ignorant ways. They thought they were It. And not only that,

but they seemed to have lost all concept of consideration for others – you know, just being nice and friendly and that.”

“And the same is true for those that grew up in the cities rather than in the rural communities,” added Takeshi. “It seems as if they have lost all focus, all concept of what it is to co-exist with other people. I mean just look at the news now, how all these young kids are stabbing teachers, causing serious amounts of trouble, precisely because they seem to have no roots, no experience of what it is like to live in a close knit family or community of any sort.”

The steak in this restaurant was particularly good; so good, in fact, that we had driven a fair way from the town in which we all lived to sample it. We ate with much gusto, and mouths were busy with the conflicting eagerness to share words and swallow food. It was a messy event.

“In my hometown,” said Hiroko, wiping sauce from her chin, “you can count the number of functioning ‘communities’ on one hand, and that’s a place with a population of, what Takeshi, 40,000 or so people?”

Takeshi nodded with a grunt and increased his chewing rate so as to announce, “Yes, and it’s funny; you’d think communities had declined because of the many ways in which the community itself had changed – with everything becoming more convenient and standardized. But I think that communities no longer function because families themselves have fallen apart.”

Hiroko picked up the thread. “People aren’t interested in looking out for one another. It’s as if in losing a sense of community life, people have gradually stopped needing to show respect and deference to the older generation. So, where once sons and daughters may have listened to what their mothers and fathers had to say, now they do exactly what they want, without much regard for others around them.”

“Our baby will be born soon,” said Takeshi, with his hand raised above his head to attract a waiter. “We want to try and give him or her a supportive base in which to grow up... Yes, another three draft beers please! And that’s why I have asked Hiroko here to come back to my parents place in *yon-gumi* – so that we can have a chance to raise the little one in a family which is part of a small community.”

“We are a little worried that there aren’t any other young couples – or indeed children – in *yon-gumi* at the moment,” said Hiroko, curling a hand around the sizeable bump at her belly, “but we think that might change as other younger people come back from the cities wanting a quieter and more ‘meaningful’ existence for their children.” She chuckled at the profound nature of the comment but Takeshi reinforced her serious tone:

“What we want to do is to react against a society which is rushing towards a situation where money orders all social relations and where people’s relationships towards one another are based only upon a what-can-I-get-out-of-this-for-myself nature. The process seems to have gone too far already, and we don’t want it to take hold in the family we bring into the world.”

The children of Japan’s modernity move on

For the Takayamas, the inheritance of a family system which has stressed independence over obligation, self-determination and freedom over social networks and harmonious relations, is not enough. In their society of peers, they have seen the results of bringing

up children in a social vacuum—away from wider extended familial support structures. They feel that this creates a selfish and arrogant generation. For them, the pursuit of a more successful formula lies not in reproducing Japan's first 'modern' family system—nor rejecting it outright—but in taking a highly individualised approach which, in this case, effectively draws upon some key *pre-industrial*, pre-Meiji agricultural communal values stressing the importance of the family's place in the wider community³⁰.

If the Takayamas can be seen to employ a highly individualised approach to directing and managing their family system, then can we see them as an example of a wider generational movement which puts such agency at the centre of their concerns? Does the fact that their family model is not 'prescribed' to them by their government or surrounding family or community but shaped by their on-going experiences and views toward their society, show that they themselves are embedded in a much wider contemporary process of change in the composition and conception of the Japanese family?

³⁰ It is of course debatable to what degree this pre-industrial familial system still exists as an observable example which younger people can follow. However, in discussions elsewhere with young people about their relationship with their grandparents, they often have a keen idea of the extent to which the Meiji and wartime transitions intimately affected their previous generations (Ackermann, 2003). They are aware, therefore, if only vaguely, of the familial conditions of their ancestral ways of life. This lack of real observable 'material' could conversely be a positive, in that they are able to 'improvise' and mould a familial world that fits various contexts and needs (see Machin et al., 1996).

As the family dissolves into individuals, we are groping for a new form of family. This group will be constituted in ways that turn a fragmented family into a family after all. There will be no feeling of constriction... Its members won't be pushy, they will treat each other gently.

(Tomiie and Ozawa, from McCreery, 2000: 255)

This extract from the Japanese periodical *Brain* illustrates how some Japanese social researchers feel that Japanese society is beginning to remake the family unit from the needs of individuals within, rather than sanctions or groups without—to reinterpret its structure and its place in a wider society seen as plural or diverse in the options and possibilities it offers.

Far removed from the concerns of the baby-boomer generation, younger people's choices and decisions regarding their approach to their familial worlds are occurring increasingly on a societal background which puts individual agency, self-determination and mobility at its center. This is a generation where young mothers are making highly individual self-determined choices about their parenting roles and influences (Sasagawa, 2003), where there is a nation-wide commentary—in the media and in the social

sciences—about how a shift towards individual approaches can be integrated with traditional values to manage and produce successful family units (Ochiai, 1994). And it is an environment where, increasingly, younger people are making their family-shaping decisions around a commonly shared discourse of “independence versus self-sacrifice” (see Nakano and Wagatsuma, 2003).

For a generation who have grown up with little example of what kind of relationship the family should have with the community and wider nation, the Takayamas represent one way in which the familial structures of life are being ordered vis-à-vis the historical and experiential examples. For them, success and happiness reside not just in the ability to be independent from ‘outdated’ social structures -- but, conversely, through being able to draw on and contribute to an extended social unit. In their attempts to plant the child back into the context of a supportive community, the Takayamas demonstrate that it is the need to provide a sense of social worth and responsibility to the next generation that pervades their notion of what it is to reach out and take hold of new social and imaginative opportunities. This is, yet again, a new interpretation of that most central socially defining paradigm: mobility—and it seems one of many new interpretations in an increasingly diverse society.

The families of Japan's modernity

The impact of industrialization and the corresponding programme of modernisation that the new Meiji government imposed upon the majority of its citizens was profound and far-reaching. In this chapter, I have attempted to add some depth to an intimate understanding of how the ensuing conceptions of mobility—of opportunities presented—have been taken up by subsequent generations in response to this modernity. And I have presented one short case study to illustrate some contemporary patterns of change in that modernity-led adaptation that I will come to expand on throughout the remaining sections. Clearly, for the majority of a nation's people to move, in little more than three generations, from a co-operative agricultural family system to one tied to a notion of the state, to have it overhauled and rejected, to attempt to pull many historical strands together and formulate highly individual and contextual strategies to building their familial worlds, is a remarkable achievement.

There have been countless ways to interpret the family with and against the collective image of one's cultural place. Indeed, pre-industrial society stressed the locale as the collective representation for the vast majority. As modernity begins to sweep in, however, the family has been caught up with an idea of itself as part-and-parcel of a wider nation-state. This powerful force of the collective representation of the familial further intensified the Japanese involvement in World War Two. But in its aftermath—in the attempts of the new children of a now generation-old modernity—the baby boomers have reacted against the restrictions that have been placed on them. And this has left the current generations with a relatively open canvas on which to draw a variety of models for structuring and remaking the Japanese family in the contexts of its surrounding collective.

There is little doubt that the countless ways in which individual Japanese have attempted to come to terms with their respective family systems, the pathways they have taken in pursuit of mobility, are particular; as particular as Seijou, as particular as the Takayama's baby's new world. But it is the way in which the characters we have become familiar with here, and the many millions that have passed before and along with them, have negotiated their sense of self identity, their evaluation of what it means to be part of community, a culture and a nation, that gives us the sense of observing not

just the Japanese, but the force of modernity in general, and how it reorders our most intimate generational relations and identities.

Inherent in the unfolding of our life course there seems to be this interesting interplay of two fundamental forces: the choices that our surrounding social groups offer us in terms of social collectives and available narratives, and our personal negotiation of our place within these worlds at particular times in our lifecourse. It is the collision of these two social realms that brings about the enormous diversity of social forms, and at the same time orders our lives within it, giving them meaning, and an all-important sense of place and direction.

In our examination of the Japanese family through three generations, I have attempted to pull out the strands of lifecourse forging decisions which have related to both the contexts in which people have found themselves – the corresponding conceptions they have had of their own mobility – and the ways they have gone about dealing with interacting and defining themselves, and their directions, within them. It is my view that it is in these negotiations that we can plot the rough course of social and cultural change and begin to discover how individuals contribute to the existence of the

collective worlds that future generations come to inhabit, and that they, in their turn, begin to change and modify.

I have suggested that central to this steady tick of change has been a concern to increase mobility. And of course, with each generation, the circumstances have been subtly different – the representations of mobility altered. These transitions of mobility have been caused by several forces of modernity and industrialisation: the realignment of social relations and systems to an interactive code based on a monetary rather than co-operative exchange; a fundamental alteration in the notion of attaching oneself to local and national collectives, and consequent needs to seek freedom from the trappings of these concepts. The circular construction of identity that we referred to in part one is here mirrored in the way in which a relocalisation of familial identity has taken place in order to ground abstract freedom into concrete and meaningful experience through restructuring the family in its collective societal contexts. Underlying these societal shifts, however, have been the generational mechanisms of cultural change – the steady interpretative re-evaluation of one's own world in the light of the one that has gone before, supplying the fuel for the pursuit of new opportunities, both concrete and imaginative.

At the most familial level, Japan's generations have gone through a series of profound transitions in the way they have related to wider ideas of their collective membership.

Interestingly, the modernity that has been responsible for the extreme nature of these shifts has produced generations which at first have seemed to pronounce tradition—like the *ie* family—as their most central paradigm. As this modernity has become more established and has given way to a “high” modernity which may be being embodied by the younger Japanese generation, its new children still maintain the need to incorporate a variety of factors—including traditional values—into their resulting family systems.

This illustrates the degree to which choice has come to characterise the worlds of the young.

The new children of modernity are very different from the old in their access to this degree of individual choice and agency, but at the same time they share a crucial feature: like their parents and grandparents they continue a generational adaptation to the changed imaginative and concrete circumstances of their lives.

Having seen then, how powerful modernity has been in re-ordering family relations through playing out the definition of the familial with the collective idea of its place in the story of Japan, we move on, in the second section of *Familial Worlds*, to consider

the Japanese community, attempting to understand how it too has been re-configured in response to changing conceptions of mobility over the last three generations. The children of modernity are just as subject, it seems, to the tremors of local community memberships and solidarities as they are to those of direct blood relations.



Time was ticking on. A brief glance at the small screen of my mobile telephone revealed it as 10.13. Where are the others? I wondered aloud.

“Oh, that’s a good point! I don’t know.” Kora paused and took his mobile phone from his pocket, squinting at it as if it emitted a blinding light. “Oi, Moto, give ol’ Kumiko a shout would ya? I’ll call ‘yer man the Aki’ and get his ass moving.”

I looked at my mobile thoughtfully as Moto and Kora disappeared into their respective zones of communication. Amazing devices. Instantly both their voices shot over the inaccessible mountain range, across the far Oita valley and into the moving vehicles that were carrying our friends towards our gathering in Kora’s log cabin.

COMMUNITY

“Where the fuck are you guys?” grunted Kora through his mobile phone.

“Whereabouts are you now?” Moto said almost simultaneously on his.

“Well, if you’re passing it then get another few packs of beer... Oh, and some dried squid... Oh, and some instant noodles for later... Yeah Yeah. Alright. Yeah. And hurry the fuck up hey?”

“Oh OK, yeah, no, it’s alright, Kora’s got Aki to get some. No. No. Just come straight on up then. Yeah, ten minutes? OK. Fine. You remember the faster road we took last time? Yeah, yep yep. OK see you in a minute. Yep. Bye!”

Kora and Moto removed their phones from the sides of their heads, squinted at the keypads and pressed the hang-up buttons. I looked up from my phone, which had kept me company by confirming that my personal numbers were still stored on board, placed it back on the bar and said,

“Good, so they’re on their way?”

We busied ourselves making preparations for dinner, which as always was to be a rather elaborate affair: prime sliced beef fried on a hot plate in the middle of the table with a variety of fresh vegetables - onions, pumpkin and cabbage – and a wonderful selection of dipping sauces.

Before long we could all hear the familiar sound of a motorcar ambling its way up the drive.

“This must be Kumiko,” said Moto, leaning his head out of a side window into the darkness.

Within minutes, Kumiko and Megumi had joined us in making things ready for dinner, and we had the hot plate switched on and ready to sizzle beef in the middle of the table.

We sat around, fully intent on eating when the plate was ready whether the others had arrived or not.

“I’ve been showing Bruce here *Kita-no-kuni kara*” announced Kora to Kumiko, eyeing the raw beef steak and hot plate in one quick eye-sweep of the table.

The two girls let out a long “Waaaaaah” sound signally both surprise and, by their immediate glances of confederation with me, empathy with my ‘ordeal’.

“No, it was interesting!” I said, with a smile. And then in a joking manner, “Reminded me of the community I live in now.”

“Ah! That’s right, Bruce is living in *Amatetsu*,” Megumi offered, applying a tone of suspicious wonder to the town name. Amongst this younger (24-29) city set, the name “Amatetsu” conjured up images of dead-end streets, of strips of old-style ‘snack’ bars frequented by farmers, and of old people in traditional communities out of touch with the young. They were, of course, right. And wrong.

Amatetsu

Amatetsu is a mid-sized town for Japan. It has the usual complement of chain stores and franchise outlets, but not a twenty-four hour drive-thru McDonalds. A heavy dose

of development around the side of town which backs on to the entrance of the motorway - including a few warehouse DIY stores and various other industrial park style retail outlets - are the town's most recent (1998) additions. Just like any such place in other parts of Japan, or indeed Europe, which has enjoyed relatively easy access to larger surrounding cities, the development around Amatetsu has taken much of the business away from the centre of the 'old' town and repositioned it in large superstores at the even more easily accessible outskirts. Here, at the soul-less fringes of this one thousand year old market town, large accessible car parks are the attraction, bringing thousands of people (in cars) from nearby villages and towns every day to explore the myriad of goods in the huge prefabricated warehouse buildings.

Visit Amatetsu as one of these day trippers, in the 'K-car' with a couple of friends or the kids, and you will never see the empty shopping 'arcade' which sits in the center of town, now only catering for a handful of local people. You would never get the chance to meet Sato, owner of the large Shiseido cosmetics shop, which was once the most profitable outlet on the 200 meter covered commercial strip.

"People used to come here in the droves...Used to be packed into this shop so tight that we would have to bring out those queue divider things to keep everything working. The

traffic used to be so bad with everyone coming from all around to shop here in the arcade, but now there's nobody, only the locals, most of whom all shop elsewhere now."

Let's imagine, however, that you did find your way to the old Amatetsu arcade, that you were then to move from this now decaying centre, past the closed down Stationery shop and right by the bare Futon shop. Walking down the narrow street you would find yourself in, you pass five or so nightspots of various sorts. All enjoyed their heyday at least a decade before and now look run--, if not completely closed, down. At the end of this street you will find a small playground which sits like a courtyard in the center of a group of old buildings housing everything from a fruit and vegetable store to a brothel called 'Love Love'. If you happened to be walking on a bright sunny afternoon, you may see some children on the swings, or kicking around a football. Continue, taking the short cut through the playground, walking south, and you will hit a miniature crossroads. You might encounter a car or two here, as you are now on the corner of *yon-gumi*, a tiny residential community consisting of nine households, a barber's shop and a shrine.

In stark contrast to the road that runs behind this small ‘hamlet’ which takes the traffic from the other residential areas of Amatetsu out to superstores and on to the motorway, *yon-gumi* resides on a quiet street approximately 100 meters long. If you were to live next door to the barber’s shop for some months, in the centre of this tiny community - you might well conclude that its inhabitants reflect the community’s rather polarised geographical location – a mix of older people somewhat exhausted by the new pace of life, and of younger dynamic movers and shakers. Live here for a few months longer, however, and it may strike you – as it did me – that something far more complex is happening here – something altogether at odds with the seeming decomposition of the old town centre. In this community, you might conclude, encroaching old-age does not necessarily lead to decay and futility: in the world of human dynamics old shops can be used to sell the latest commercial goods.

The people of yon-gumi

The first port-of-call in any visit to *yon-gumi* is to poke your head into Hirana’s barber’s shop. Not only does it sit in the center of the community, its front a Swiss-inspired mix

of white washed wooden paneling and cutesy flowered decoration, but being the one commercial enterprise, it is the only place you can really just walk into for a chat, or, of course, a haircut.

Hirana is a tubby, good-humoured man of 40 whose dream has always been to travel the world visiting other barbershops – to quiz the owners about their preferred cutting styles, to ask them how they came to be barbers. As often seems the case in small-scale communities of this sort, those in the positions of maintaining business relationships with others in the community are the most steadfast in their attitudes. Ask Hirana if he thinks that the community has changed in any significant way over the last two generations and he will say:

“Oh no, there has been no change at all – not in the slightest.” But he will say this with a quiet nervousness, as if there is a Orwellian telescreen in the corner of his small studio monitoring his responses. Press him on the topic of change, and his position as a guardian of the status quo seems to be clear:

“No, no, I mean there have been economic changes, of course. There’s enough to eat, people have a better quality of life. But as for traditions and the make-up of the community, no, nothing at all – exactly the same as when I was a boy.”

Interestingly, while I was conducting a taped interview with Hirana, Kawaguchi - a forty-nine year old father of three - popped into the barber’s shop for a chat. Once it became clear to Kawaguchi that I was conducting an interview inquiring on the nature of change in this small community, he became quite animated.

“How interesting, oh yes. Oh, it’s completely different now. . . completely.”

The contrast of this and subsequent remarks to Hirana’s couldn’t have been more stark – a kind of native versus tour rep. perspective? What could explain the discrepancy of opinion between the two men? Was Hirana just turning on the image of continuity for me, the outsider? Or was he scared of letting me in to the inner workings of *yon-gumi*, attempting to protect it from prying eyes? Or was Hirana just out of touch with what was going on here, or was Kawaguchi the one with the skewed perspective?

In this tiny hamlet that had seen centuries of change, I soon came to realize that there were people who thought and felt part of the community group and those who felt marginalized and rejected. There were those who felt that the community had real meaning and should be preserved, and those who would sooner endure a night at the top of Mount Aso than a two-hour community meeting. The activities and stories, actions and assertions of those who lived in or as part of one the nine households all held clues as to how the tens of thousands of communities like *yon-gumi* had re-configured themselves over time. And it was here, living as part of this rather intangible collection of people, where I was hoping to chart the generational transitions of what it has meant, and now means, to be part of a Japanese community.

Communities and history

Alan Macfarlane sets out some of the problems and pitfalls of studying a ‘community’.

We see that the idea of community itself is constructed in order to create the idea of ‘society’ in the contexts of the traditional and modern: “The belief that stable and tightly-knit communities have existed in the past and still survive in distant lands is an

important myth for industrial and highly mobile societies” (Macfarlane, 1977: 1). The extent to which anthropologists and historians have *actually* seen true stability and cohesion in the communities they have studied is questionable, given the temptation to conjure up romanticized opposites to their increasingly complex home societies. The concern showed by foreign journalists and commentators in attempting to portray Japanese society as suspended between the past and present – with predictable images of women in kimonos using mobile phones, or bullet trains rushing past Mount Fuji – shows what happens when the outside world can’t compute the co-existence (real or otherwise) of notions of “modern” society and “traditional” community (see Littlewood, 1992).

So our understanding of what a community is can be coloured by our perceptions of who we are and what kind of society we live in. But this concern opens up another hazard in the study and consideration of the community – are even our larger societies a form of community, and if so, on what scale do we see a community existing, and over what time period? Hoskins studied the English parish of Wigston Magna (population 400 in 1563) over nine centuries (Hoskins, 1957). Bestor studied a small neighbourhood in Tokyo for five or so years (Bestor, 1989). Some anthropologists, in search of understanding ‘transient’ communities spend only a few weeks doing

fieldwork in multiple locations (Hendry, 2002). A community can be geographically located in one locale or socially dispersed across a country, or continent, or world (Konig, 1971).

Lastly, there are different ‘levels’ of community (see also Redfield, 1941) that stake various claims on our membership. There is the “community of what ought to happen (the moral community); the community of what is thought does happen; the behavioural or statistical community of what does, if counted, happen. “People, thus, may behave statistically in the way they are thought to behave and it is conceived that they ought to behave. Yet it is often the case that the three different levels are entirely at variance” (Macfarlane, 1977:13).

Despite all of these warnings I would like to begin by understanding the community as a solidarity built upon face-to-face interactions. As for attempting to understand behaviour that is or is not statistically in line with the various levels of community that Redfield identifies, we shall look at the way dominant narratives and attitudes towards the community have changed, in order to incorporate the fullest possible picture of social change and diversity. In the previous section, Family, for example, we saw how the family system has been progressing through key transitions – how changing

conceptions of social and imaginative mobility were becoming bound to different generational interpretations of what it means to be part of a Japanese family. Here, in an examination of a small Japanese hamlet, we shall attempt to understand the impact these changes have had on community life, the meaning of what it is to be a member of a community like *yon-gumi*. We progress with McFarlane's warnings carefully in mind, then, to understanding what it would have been like in *yon-gumi*, a small community 'team' of nine households, three generations ago...

The voices of the elders

"Life was hard. I mean, we take for granted now that we have enough to eat and we don't need to work or to make sure that we maintain the right relationships to survive. Back when I was a girl everything was stricter and life had a rigid, knife-edge feel."

Mayumi is eighty-five years old, but by watching the movements and contours of her face while she speaks of her time in *yon-gumi* as a young girl, she could be fifty. Her eloquence in speech and gesture reflects her rather special place in *yon-gumi* history – she came here from the city when it was being bombed in the Second World War – a

uptown city girl who suddenly found herself amongst the rural working people. She was given no special treatment and had to learn how to work like all the rest. In this, she was typical of the majority of her gender and generation.

Women born in the early years of the twentieth century still carried vivid memories of stoking kitchen fires with wood they had gathered in the mountains, of drawing water from wells some distance from their houses, and of washing clothes in nearby streams – chopping holes through ice in the winter.

(Bernstein, 1983: 157)

As Mayumi soon discovered, *yon-gumi* was part of a larger agricultural community. *Gumi*, or its equivalent *kumi* means ‘team’ and existed within an even larger group of households known as the *buraku*, or hamlet structure to work co-operatively for the sake of the village—*yon* (or four) identified *yon-gumi* as team number four. As the memories of women in Bernstein’s documentary account of Japanese farm women illustrate, community life in the first few decades of the 20th Century structured vital work distribution and production relations at a time of relative poverty. At this time, the

community played a supportive role, emphasising the communal interests of production and co-operation over class interests for the most part (Fukutake, 1974).

In the comings and goings of many of the older *yon-gumi* residents there is still a strong sense of these collaborative roots. Gora, an elderly man in his late seventies sees, it seems, only that aspect of *yon-gumi* existence that speaks to co-operative social life:

“Oh yes, I remember when as children the whole community would feel like a family – when people would walk into each other’s houses without invitation or need or reason. As a boy, I felt mothered and fathered not just by my parents, but by the other members of the community households. We would participate in everything together, like outings to the nearby towns, or climbing a mountain, or in the festivals...”³¹

Gora’s memories are similar to the other half-dozen elderly men in *yon-gumi*, who, when speaking about their lives in the hamlet would often become quite emotional. Fukutami, a man of eighty-two even began to weep upon recounting the way in which, as boys, *yon-gumi* members would play in the protective solidarity of this collection of households.

³¹ Terms used here included: *kazoku mitai ni* (like a family) *minna to issyou ni* (everyone together).

“And it is so nice,” he said between sniffs and brief sobs, and supported through his grief by a bottle of two of *shouchu* potato spirit mixed with hot water, “that you are interested. So many young people are in a different world from the one we grew up in. I’m not saying that they are wrong to look for other things in life, but it makes me so sad that that world has gone, and lives now only in our heads.”

Fukutami’s nostalgia and emotion were touching and without doubt genuine, but the memories of the older men in general – or at least the narratives into which these memories were put – were at odds with the slant put on things by Mayumi and other elderly women in *yon-gumi*.

“Yes, well,” said eighty-two year old Mada, “times were tough when I was a girl. There wasn’t any ability to do what you wanted to do and people could be quite awful. I remember several times when all I wanted to do was leave and live in another place – away from the judgements and ‘cage’ of living in such close quarters.”

The rather negative views that Mada, Mayumi, and some of the other elderly women had of community life were difficult to tease out. Soon after I began to conduct

interviews in *yon-gumi*, word had clearly got around that I was asking rather personal questions – trying to probe into the history of the hamlet. This put real stress on several of the women, who obviously felt that they shouldn't be 'bad-mouthing' anybody. So much so did this worry affect one lady, Hirata, in her late sixties, that she kindly turned up for our interview but insisted that she stay on the front step of my entrance-way with the door open 'to the sun' while we talked. Eventually convincing her to come into the kitchen for some tea, she spoke in single word answers and acted at odds with her rather bubbly personality, in a completely guarded and self-conscious fashion.

So, despite the strong notions of co-operation and collaboration inherent in the majority of male accounts of community life, for women the overwhelming notion of suffocating social sanctions imposed by households on each other seemed to characterise life. What patterns of change and circumstance were these two polarised understandings of community history representing?

Modernity's redesigning of community relations

Firstly, in order to answer this question, we must remind ourselves of the degree to which the designers of post-Meiji society wanted to involve their population in all

aspects of the new nation. By the mid-thirties, that rhetoric of nation had not only infused the family as we saw in the last section, but had also begun to alter the way in which people were interacting within and thinking about their local communities.

Returning to Suyemura we see that,

Whereas formerly neither the farmer nor the government was ever much worried about such an abstraction as patriotism so long as the farmer produced his rice, today, as a powerful tool of social control, nationalism is stressed in education, in conscription, in public talks in the school auditorium, and in the encouragement of societies such as the Women's Patriotic Society... The controlled changes, such as national societies and government schools, have affected the internal relations (of neighbourhood and village)... causing them to act together... in the interests of the nation... money and machines (are) breaking down the old (neighbourhood) co-operative forms...(and) relations have been changed from political allegiance to the lord of Sagara at Hitoyoshi to loyalty for the Emperor of Japan; local loyalties are re-placed by national ones...

(Embree, 1972[1939]; 302-304)

These changes from local to national loyalties hint at transitions in the make up of community memberships, not just in Suye Mura but all over Japan. As people became involved in connecting with new national discourses, so the sense of local-level co-operative solidarity became undermined and re-ordered in ways that Embree describes. And, again, as we saw in the last part, this process is given significant amplification by the influx of money, it being “just this point – the increased use of money and its disintegrating effect on the older social structures – that is so striking in the rural life of Japan” (1972 [1939]: 306).

The new social relationships and community structures which formed as a result of these conceptual and economic changes, then, were hybrid forms of traditional co-operative structures (Embree, 1972 [1939]). While community life, on the surface, was still largely based upon co-operative social structures, a new intensity of competition for larger cultural/national memberships and material wealth fragmented the traditional sense of local solidarity. Within a decade of such transitions, the voices of *yon-gumi*’s elders attest to the emergence of strong patterns of social sanctioning on one another – competition on social *and* economic grounds presenting real challenges to living in

close quarters with remnants of older co-operative systems precariously underpinning a changed day-to-day existence.

The post-Meiji reconfiguration of the community, then, illustrates that maintaining the community in the ways that the elderly women of *yon-gumi* remember - its relations, and its social sanctioning principles – represented a *new form* of community structure.

Quite contrary to the mythical old-style tight knit communities that McFarlane identifies, older pre-Meiji Japanese communities were *looser* structures than their post-Meiji counterparts—they were based on a greater range of family systems and had more egalitarian labour relations. In the Post-Meiji era, however, like bolstering the *ie* family system with a full and determined commitment to ‘plug-in’ to new national narratives, fully investing in one’s community was seen as part of a journey towards a new form of existence: national membership (Dore, 1978). This membership or “citizenship” became a goal that needed to be both achieved and maintained—it was the door to a new form of social and imaginative mobility.

Perhaps, then, to attempt to explain the gender divide between the types of social memory I identified in *yon-gumi*, we can suggest that women, who traditionally took the brunt of conforming to forms of social control, were most affected by the core change

from an open-collaborative to a sanctioned-collaborative community. Their memories are thus coloured by the stress of maintaining such structures. Everyone, however, understood the consequences of not fitting in:

“People were scared,” admitted Hanada, the forty-year-old son of a seventy-two-year-old part time farmer who lived in *yon-gumi*, to me during an interview, “scared of being ousted from the community. What would you do if such a thing happened? This place was the whole world.”

Social sanctioning and exclusion

We have heard Kora speak of his father’s mountain village, and Seijou talk of his bound relationship to the opinions and actions of his surrounding social relationships. It is perhaps interesting to re-affirm, however, that these forms of social control are by no means unique to Japan. Indeed, the mechanisms of social sanctioning and exclusion can be seen everywhere where social capital is in short supply: in Bethnal Green, London in the late sixties (Young and Wilmot, from Crow and Allen, 1994); Italy in the mid-

sixties (Lopreato, 1967); Wales in the present day (Jones, 2001), to name but three relevant studies.

When we are examining change in the makeup of a community, then, we are ascertaining how the borders and boundaries and patterns of exclusion and inclusion are reworking themselves to reflect the new ‘content’, or stuffing, of this social unit (see also Cohen, 1985 and Bestor, 1985).

In a well-respected and thorough examination, Erwin H. Johnson reflects upon changes in the Japanese community from the Tokugawa era to the present. He concludes that even up to the present day, “Both hierarchical and egalitarian hamlets have frequently retained their exclusive, or closed, nature...” (Johnson, 1967: 171).

Johnson was writing in the mid-sixties, at a time when Kora and the Seijous (see Part Two) would have been in their teenage years, before they had decided to reject key components of their received narratives and form new ideas of themselves in the world. He was attuned to understanding the way that people thought about their community membership in an exclusive imaginative framework – a framework that I shall give the name *enclosed solidarity*.

Enclosed solidarities

In communities re-configured to the chimes of industrialisation, opportunities to invest in new social relations were rare and valuable for the majority agricultural communities. To paraphrase Scherer (1972): as a social form, community membership encompasses many demands upon the members' social capital. In the social stock exchange of agrarian Japan, investment in one's community tended to be total – there being no money 'left in the bank' for alternative social memberships.

The internalisation of the social sanctioning systems that came to broadly characterise post-Meiji and pre-war Japanese agricultural communities worked then to further isolate and restrict mobility even as they were the consequence of people's attempts to expand their social and imaginative horizons. The result, I suggest, of this rather implosive process of change was that solidarity too was brought inward. In a world where actions could be interpreted as anti-community, any sense of solidarity that came to exist was precious and in need of protection. In such a state, people would have found it difficult

to invest social capital in relations outside their community – or, more commonly, in outsiders coming to the community.

“I was treated far worse than other women of my age, precisely because, as an outsider, I was a threat to their little world.” Mayumi (85).

Thus the sense of community solidarity became defined in opposition to any other *outside* community relations, and so the concept of enclosure came to characterise communities like *yon-gumi* all over Japan for decades to come.

Many decades later

If you were to move to *yon-gumi* now, you might perhaps not even notice that there was a community of any sort at all. In fact, when the house that I rented became available – through an informant of mine’s classmate - the ‘landlady’ (who also became a friend and informant) sat me down, and with a serious face that made me think that she was going to let me into some awful secret, said,

“You know that this house is part of a *kumi*?” She whispered this last word as if its very meaning had the potential to insult. “You’ll have to decide whether you will or won’t *participate*.” Again, she pursed her lips to allow this seemingly distasteful concept out of her mouth.

In the time between the post Meiji re-configuration of the community and the present, some mighty changes had occurred. Clearly, one now has the option of whether or not even to acknowledge the existence of the surrounding group of households as a community at all. On my leaving *yon-gumi*, after eighteen months of residence, the new tenant – a single women in her mid-forties - decided, after a minute or two’s contemplation and some words of advice from the landlady, that she would give the whole ‘community thing’ a miss.

What on earth had happened? What key factors influenced a move way from understanding the hamlet as the limits of one’s social and imaginative mobility – past an enclosed solidarity? How did older people, as well as the next generation, begin to stock up on social capital so that they were able to see this community as one option for investment, rather than the *only* option?



The hot plate was ready to go and as we poured each other drinks Megumi smiled – she had a beautiful open face and eyes which expressed the emotional content of what she wanted to say before she spoke –

“I don’t know how you cope with life in Amatetsu: all those obligations to behave in certain ways and clean the shrine at stupid times in the morning. Amazing that you put yourself through it!”

“Absolutely amazing!” added Kumiko, “that you should *choose* to live in such a place.

I mean, I can understand people who are from those small towns being there – they have nowhere else to go – but to actually *select* a place like that to be in every day – I mean, are you mad?”

Everyone laughed, and we began to set meat and vegetables on to the hot plate. Fat and oil sizzled fiercely as we stirred the food around in front of us with our chopsticks.

“You young folk should take notice”, said Kora. “I’m sure if more people lived in a community like Amatetsu we would sort out a lot of the problems that this society is having with delinquent kids and the like. Put a bit of human dynamics back into the equation – harmony, man. Actually, fuck that, I don’t think I could handle it at all – that’s why I moved out of the shit hole of a community I lived in as a kid.”

I found this so funny that I almost spat out a mouthful of green pepper and noodles. We all laughed hard and shared in our good humour, our good fortune at knowing one another, and in the rest of the hot, delicious dinner that we took from a plate in the centre of our table.



In his comical reflection on both the value of community participation and the burden of living under its restrictions, Kora reveals some core generational information on why the community has lost its hold on social and imaginative consciousness. Many of Kora’s generation have needed independence from the strict social structures of their forebears. Whether they have found this through a physical movement away from these

communities (as Kora has), or through enduring these restrictions while all the while trying to incite change, it seems that:

“People have more freedom now, there is more freedom to do what one pleases, to live by one’s own rules”. Hirana, 43 years old. *Yon-gumi* resident.

In the transitions of generational inheritance, then, we can identify the way that an increase in both social and imaginative mobility has come to affect people’s attitudes to membership in *yon-gumi*. As we observed in Part One, these increases can be seen in the way that new conceptual levels of understanding have been made concrete in the social reality, and correspondingly, where changes in real interaction have led the way to new conceptual models of understanding.

The abstract into the concrete...

Perhaps the most important conceptual leap in the reconfiguration of the Japanese hamlet – and also one to characterise change on the family level too – was the influence of defeat and occupation in the Second World War and the consequent questioning of

the manufactured link between the Japanese family, community, culture and nation.

One of the limitations ‘imposed’ upon people’s imaginations was the fact that in order to achieve a sense of imaginative mobility you had to ‘buy in’ to all of the facets of ‘Japanese’ social life. The community was the most tangible of these after the family - involving as it does *real* social relations – and it became an important symbol of Japan’s wider efforts to incite national pride and loyalty (see again Dore, 1978). As this imaginative framework came tumbling down, so then did people’s idea that this was the only local social collective in which investment was appropriate. For the first time since the Meiji restoration, I suggest, post-war Japan released social capital from the nationally crafted coffers of State control.

We can see how, by the mid-fifties, these conceptual changes began to take shape – alongside the existing forms of solidarity - in the community of Niiike,

The end of the war (has) not fully changed the situation, for the *mura* still must do much of the work of prefectural and national government and enforce their laws. It is not simply one of a series of graduated spheres of control beginning at the *buraku* and reaching up to the national capital. It is a meeting point of two opposed systems of control which adjust to each

other in uneasy compromise. The memory of dominance by the outside system remains, and the fear that the *mura* may soon again become the tool of a resurgent national government, despite all legal checks, is a very real deterrent to wholehearted participation in *mura* affairs.

(Beardsley et al. 1959:287)

If, by the mid-fifties, we see the co-existence of social structures reflecting post-Meiji, pre-war communities alongside new forms of solidarity reflecting a fresh relationship to community membership, then we can indeed suggest that the deconstruction of the ‘community of enclosed solidarity’ was well on the way by the time Kora and his generation were in their teens.

In 1953, a law was passed which consolidated hamlets, villages and towns into larger administrative units. This law altered the “political importance of the hamlet more than any single action since the establishment of the local government system in 1889” (Smith, 1978). I suggest that the substantial undermining of the power of the hamlet that this law brought about contributed greatly to the resolve of the subsequent generation to reject the notion of traditional community, hamlet, solidarity.

In a study examining the 'Price of Progress in a Japanese Village', Smith (1978) begins to see the generational trend to continue the breakdown of traditional hamlet solidarity.

Examining a community called Kurusu from 1951 to 1975, Smith concludes that:

The constraints of a hamlet-centered life have little appeal to the young, and their elders seem powerless to communicate to them their own sense of its value and its promise. Indeed, by their own example they have placed its most fundamental principles in jeopardy.

(Smith 1978: 248)

Again, it is the powerful forces of social sanctioning characteristic arising in post-Meiji communities that come to drive new generations – in search of new freedoms and possibilities – away from the traditional community. Conceptually, the requirement to invest in the community as a means to gain mobility has broken down, and as a consequence, younger people (now in their forties and fifties) begin to interact and behave differently within the old structures.

Perhaps what has happened is that the villagers at two extremes – those who found the older system most repressive, and those who found it most

rewarding – have managed to escape it entirely, leaving behind only those who lack the energy or capacity either to resurrect the system or to destroy it completely.

(Smith 1978:248)

The community of enclosed solidarity has thus been deconstructed conceptually through the concerted efforts of what we now refer to as the ‘middle generation’ attempting to acquire liberation by opposing their elder’s social structures.

among the older villagers the chief stress is on the importance of maintaining the locale’s past sentiments – which often appear as idealised versions of the solidarity and intimacy of times gone by... The younger adults – in an interesting inversion... call for... the values of personal fulfilment and freedom.

(Ben-Ari 1991:273)

Or, as one of my informants put this:

“I find it very difficult to see any value in participating in this community. The family is more important to me – we can help each other in a kind of mini-community without all the trouble of socialising with potentially difficult people. Also, I prefer to choose the people with whom I become involved – people from my swimming class, or other mothers that I meet at kindergarten.” Takahiro, 42-year-old ex-*yon-gumi* resident; mother of three.

Takahiro was my landlady, and had ‘endured’ community life in *yon-gumi* into her thirties. Her marriage to her husband at thirty-three took her out of the community and into a nearby city. In this, she represented about 50% of her generation in *yon-gumi* – the ones that had ‘got-away’. Her remarks about the family being more important to her than the community, however, reflected the sentiments of almost all of *yon-gumi*’s middle generation – whether still residing there or not. We looked at this in detail in the Family section.

In shifting their loyalties from the community to the family and other like social groups, the middle generation have made it very difficult for communities of enclosed solidarity to sanction their behaviour. Quite simply, if people don’t acknowledge a social system as being in existence, it will lose whatever hold it has on the imaginative and

behavioural minds of its so-called members. For the middle generation of *yon-gumi*, the fact that their parents' model of what the community *ought* to be has conflicted with a world where new social and imaginative possibilities abound, has led their generation to be in need of more specialised and intimate forms of solidarity.

In the move from conceptual breakdown of what the community stands for to the concrete ways in which people go about interacting with different social groups, then, we have seen a complete re-evaluation of this social collective. In the constant re-negotiation of the abstract and the real – the reinterpretation of community membership in response to changing conceptions of social and imaginative mobility – we see the various stages of such negotiation characterised by the different generational cohorts within these local communities.

It is perhaps important to reiterate that there is an important mechanism of change in this very simple observation which relates to human sociality in general, not just to Japan in particular: that as generations give way to one another, they become defined in opposition. Thus, younger adults call for the values of personal fulfilment and freedom *not only* because their surrounding world gives them these options, *but precisely because* their parents' world did not. Again, then, we see social change manifest in the

collision between available narrative understanding of place and identity and the need to make out of this the individual social fabric and decision-making processes which form our life courses (see Part One, Thompson, 1993 and Mathews and White 2003).

With this theoretical understanding in mind, we move on to looking at how young people in *yon-gumi* are beginning to understand the worlds outside their families. Their parents have been so successful at rejecting the community of enclosed solidarity that we are compelled to ask how young people now connect with others outside the family at all.

Voices from the younger people

On a breezy early evening in November, I invited Kawaguchi, 49, and one of his sons, Hiromi 20, to come over to my house for some tea and an informal interview. During this one-hour meeting, the subject of hamlet loyalty came up. Clearly Kawaguchi, who convened the by-monthly community meetings, was in some turmoil as to his position:

“Yes, well, I *loathe* this hamlet and the life that goes with it. I have never liked the sneakiness of people prying into other people’s business. I don’t know why I put up with doing the administrative duties – maybe it’s just that no one else would. And it’s strange, I suppose I do feel first and foremost a member of *yon-gumi* – rather than Amatetsu – and that gives me a sense of responsibility to the hamlet – a responsibility I don’t particularly want....”

“See, now that’s weird, Dad, don’t you think?” interjected Hiromi. “Like, I don’t feel part of this... hamlet... or whatever you call it. I am first and foremost from Amatetsu... in fact, probably I would say I’m a member of Fukuoka prefecture before I would think of myself as an ‘Amatetsuan’ or whatever.”

I witnessed several such interchanges between middle-generation *yon-gumi* residents and their children. Typical of the responses to their children’s comments, Kawaguchi’s generation displayed a muted respect for their young people’s different co-operative level. For a generation largely held hostage by the values of their elders (even while many did succeed in defining new values for themselves), that their children were freed from any obligation to the hamlet represented a positive shift of social and imaginative

mobility – indeed one that many had deliberately tried to instigate on the family level – see the Seijous, Family section.

But if young people in *yon-gumi* were indeed transcending community types characteristic of older generations, what kinds of community were they taking on? In a world free of neighbourly obligation and geographically defined social circles, how were young people creating social networks and relations outside their immediate families?

“It’s an interesting style of music,” says Hiromi, “sort of a instrumental blend of Indian rhythm and Indonesian melody. A lot of people are into it now. A while ago it was mainly a fringe thing, but now it’s become pretty popular. I get a lot of it from the Internet, but friends exchange CDs and stuff too – and I hear they are even selling them at that little record shop in Amatetsu, although I haven’t been there yet.”

Hiromi is typical of a young person in his late teens or early twenties. His friends are determined through his interests in various fashions and lifestyles. He attends outdoor events which celebrate his particular interests in musical styles and influences.

Hiromi’s social world is thus in a state of perpetual motion; he moves through networks

of people and occasions as he chooses, mixing and interacting around core narrative themes which are open to constant re-interpretation and change. Nobu and Daisuke provide further examples:

Nobu and Daisuke

Nobu and Daisuke were in their very early twenties when I met them in a bar in the city of Fukuoka – a forty minute drive from the town of Amatestu. A mutual friend who happened to know that we all lived in the same town had introduced us as ‘fellow Amatetsuians’.

“Wow, you live in Amatestu?” I asked, genuinely surprised that these highly sophisticated and well-spoken young men inhabited the same country setting as myself.

“Oh yes, we do. And what the hell are *you* doing in Amatestu?” they asked with even greater surprise.

I explained that I was doing research in the small hamlet of *yon-gumi* and that I was hoping to talk to people just like them.

As the night wore on we talked at length about the town we lived in, about how these two young men had made a break from the more traditional goings-on, the community meetings and the like. They saw Amatestu as a home base – a place from which to launch themselves into worlds beyond. To them the community did not represent the boundaries of social existence but the very foundation from which they built a dynamic and meaningful cosmopolitan set of relationships and locations.

“It’s not that ‘community life’ there is so bad, exactly. But there is not much for us, so to speak, ‘young people’ who get turned on by totally different things. I mean, I was at a reggae concert on the beach at *Inoshima* in August dancing with a Japanese girl with a three-foot-tall afro – I couldn’t see my old man doing that at a *chonaikai*!” Daisuke laughed and shook his head.

“I don’t wish them any disrespect, but there is a real sense of outdatedness – of a gap between what my world is about and what those *Oyajis* [older men] think and do and say.”

I asked the two young men if they could try to characterise these differences.

“Well,” laughed Nobu, inserting his pack of cigarettes and lighter into his top pocket and taking a wet cloth off the bar to wipe his head with it, “you could do this...”.

Daisuke laughed at this performance of *oyaji* behaviour—older men often keep cigarettes and a lighter in a top shirt pocket and use a hot towel to wipe sweat from their heads, and this is seen by the young as very “uncool.” He continued:

“Yeah, right, Nobu, good one... But no, seriously,” and he glanced at Nobu hoping for confirmation, “it’s more about what we, as a generation have, and what they don’t.

Like we are here now in this bar, right? We are here from the town of Amatetsu. Now, me and Nobu come here a lot – we like the music they play and we are good buddies with the DJ Tomi and some of the other guys who play here. And occasionally some friends of one or another of us will head down from Tokyo or Osaka to see a set, or just to hang out.

In turn, those guys – and many of us – have links with people further afield, from other countries maybe. This means that basically our ‘community’ is kind of linked to thousands of others – and I suppose that is what makes us so different from our parents,

and certainly our grandparents, back in Amatetsu. I mean, they have, like, the *kumi*, their work community and maybe some old friends that they go for a drink with; but that's it!"

"Yeah," added Nobu, "and I suppose they get that from the way they were brought up to think of everyone as a collective. My dad often goes on about obligation to others in the community and all that. We do have groups but they are different from the groups that older people understand. I don't know how exactly...I can only say that there is a sense of the world we live in being sort of... connected."

In their explanations of their world, in the way that they spoke – a kind of hybrid of Kyushu dialect and Tokyo vocal presentation that sounded highly contemporary -- in their very appearance and the way they carried and presented themselves, Nobu, Daisuke and the majority of the other young people I came to know from Amatetsu were undeniably connected to influences beyond their locales. Not only were their day-to-day lives characterised by wildly different forms of social relations and interactions, but the wider Japan of which they imagined themselves a part was radically different too. This was a world linked and bound to many networks – sets of relations formed

around stylistic and transient trends. This was a polar opposite to a solidarity based on an enclosed, exclusive collective model.

Overwhelmingly, Japan's youth make connections among others through stylistic trends that embody a huge variety of forms. From musically defined interest groups, to entire lifestyle choices that dictate what events people go to (concerts, festivals and the like), the type of friends they have, and even the type of attitudes they hold, contemporary Japan reflects what many commentators have called (in various guises) a society of mass popular consumption (Powers et al, 1989; Clammer, 1997; McCreery, 2000), or "popular culture" (see Martinez, 1998).

Far from the often negative slant put on communities of consumption by some theorists and many social commentators, I would like to suggest that not only does mass popular consumption prevent "one from being excluded from the club" (Clammer, 1997:168), but it actively creates a club of its own—a club whose framework is built from interconnecting strands of common group interests and individual expressions of identity. And perhaps most importantly, it is a club whose premise for existence is its ability to evolve and to change in response to individual needs to *move*. Indeed, the notions of dynamism and fluidity are central to the community of consumption,

structuring the very concrete interactions which occur under its conceptual umbrella.

This popular culture thus “reflects the diversity of Japanese society at any given moment (and) can also accommodate changes throughout time... is able to travel and be transformed...” (Martinez, 1998: 3).

In many ways, then, the ‘community of consumption’ has replaced the need for traditional community hamlet solidarity in the minds of the young. They are able to improvise spontaneous relationship networks – able to use the community of consumption to achieve a non-geographically specific membership with others, which has a need for social and imaginative mobility at its heart. Thus the community of consumption represents the rechanneling of social capital – or in Clammer’s words “a way of accumulating cultural capital” (1997:167) – which takes the search for mobility to new levels, giving us subjectivities “unprecedented in human history” (1997:154).

If we see that the middle generation’s rejection of their parent’s notions of enclosed solidarity has cleared the way for their children to place mobility at the heart of their ‘communities of consumption’, then what effects have these two fundamental generational transitions had for older people living in communities? Can we see any evidence that they are changing their interpretations of community membership in order

to bring meaning back to the traditional co-operative community? We have seen that although they have been frustrated in their desire to bring back community solidarity, the memory of Pre and Post-Meiji communities built on genuine collaborative foundations remains.

The community of exposed solidarity

If you were to go to one of the only community meetings that *yon-gumi* organises – the *chonaikai* – the lack of young people attending would strike you, as it does older people, as testament to inevitable demise of the community identity. Where young people have chosen non-membership over inclusion within enclosed forms of solidarity, the lifeblood of the elderly community drains away as the younger generations choose to be mobile. There is more to this, however, than meets the eye.

For in very real ways, these older people, disenfranchised by the removal of the reproductive element of their social system, have begun to re-evaluate what the community should mean – not on their own terms, but in the terms of those who exist on its borders – the young.

The Fukumachis are a couple in their mid seventies who have recently been participating in an Amatetsu-wide program to become more computer literate. They have attended several classes in local offices that were run by another informant of mine called Jousaki. Jousaki, a lively looking younger man than his forty years, hires twentysomethings to help him get across some of the most difficult – and most enjoyable – aspects of using computers.

“It can be difficult to teach older people how to use computers,” says Jousaki. “You have to remember that they have *no* concept whatsoever of what the technology is about. You have to start with the concept of moving a mouse pointer around a screen – that kind of thing. But once they get used to it, you’d be surprised how liberating they find being able to participate in things that before they had only heard about and never considered they would be able to do. The Internet has been a fantastic tool for bringing older people in to the world of technology – I’ve seen people in their eighties delighted when they get emails from grandchildren. And what’s nice is that it brings older and younger people together – often grandchildren will send a link to a site they are interested in, and their grandparents can follow up their interests – indeed, start looking

up things on their own accord. It really is like watching them become exposed to a whole new world.”

The meeting of new worlds defined by the young, and older worlds by the elderly, is not just confined to classrooms. In almost all of my interviews with elderly people in *yongumi*, computer technology had been introduced to them by their children when home visiting, or by grandchildren who decided that they should put their grandparents online themselves.

In a world where older people have previously felt alienated by their belief in a cooperative, enclosed community, new spaces for inter-generational communication have forced older conceptions of enclosed solidarity to come into contact with these newer forms of stylistic solidarity. The emotive, conflicting elements of generational transmission have skipped a generation – i.e. older people can look upon their grandchildren without feeling directly *responsible* for their way of life (and furthermore one could suggest their grandchildren have a special place in the hearts of Japanese in general). Thus, there are few opportunities for older people to reject out of hand the lifestyles of the young.

Swapping their roles as guardians and protectors of a social unit informed and maintained through social sanctions, a majority of *yon-gumi*'s elderly community are beginning to rethink what their community could now encompass. While their community duties are administrative in nature, their discourse with each other is becoming more and more informed by the trends, fashions and whims of the younger folk. Not only is it cool to ask about one's Internet service provider, but to consult the young on a myriad of subjects from Mp3 files to Indian culture (which has recently become a popular travel destination and source of musical influence amongst Japan's young).

Indeed, on more than one occasion where I, as often was the case, was the only "young" person under 45 at a particular community gathering, I would be asked more about the common 'symbols' of youth understanding – the internet, music, travel, generational differences – than I would be quizzed on my foreignness. This was an experience that will strike any long-term non-Japanese resident as particularly interesting and contemporary.

The dialogues of the community, then – and increasingly of the older people who traditionally made them the narratives of identity – are being informed from the

‘outside’, from what would have been the excluded arenas of knowledge (as far as older people’s notions of communities defined through ‘enclosed’ solidarity go). This ‘opening’ of the channels through which narratives are ‘allowed’ to flow has had the effect of re-structuring the very nature of this basic social unit’s configuration. Not only does what used to be out-of-bounds now represent a new form of social fuel – the ability to connect to new social and imaginative possibilities representing mobility – but this incorporation of the previously ‘unknown’ is becoming the defining narrative of community solidarity. To this configuration I shall give the name *exposed solidarity*, in contrast to the previous *enclosed* solidarity.

These are new imaginative opportunities for older people, whereby they can take on a new conception of mobility. This sense of mobility, however, has not come to them through transitions from previous generations, nor does it represent a deliberate rejection or modification of existing or inherited narratives. These new notions have instead come from below – from the rejections that the subsequent generations are already involved in, and the subsequent effects that these rejections have had on the nature of identity construction for Japan’s youth.

Thus we see a key generational phenomena at work: that generations familiar with what it is like to have their narratives rejected can then recognise the value of subsequent generation's creations of new types of solidarity which reflect the changed social worlds in which they find themselves. Presented with these contemporary models of membership and identity – and given the gap of one generation - older people can then incorporate these new imaginative structures 'from below' into their evolving outlooks.

In a small scale community such as *yon-gumi*, then, the need for some kind of collective membership is such that older people's established notions of what the community *should* be about are slowly displaced by their more personal needs to plug in to this sense of imaginative mobility. Thus, together, and in the most part unintentionally, younger people are influencing the very construction of the community memberships their parents have rejected. Like the Takayamas (see Family section), however, this now relatively 'free' community canvas is seen as a picture they – as a young family – have the power to transform into a social and geographical zone of support for their children, utilising its potential *exposed* group solidarity.

To evaluate the viability and vigor of a neighborhood, then, it is not enough to find out the proportion of all residents who are appreciably

involved in ‘neighboring’ or local voluntary organizations. A far more pressing problem is the extent to which (members of) select groups, no matter how few in number, are able to keep intact neighborhood boundaries, to provide a general knowledge of its internal structure, and to keep alive their myth of unity and cohesion.

(Suttles, from Bestor, 1989: 268).

In the hamlet of *yon-gumi*, it has been the reconstruction of community boundaries to let ideas and people in, a reconfiguration of the internal structure as dynamic, and the putting in place of an imaginative framework for a wide diversity of social membership, which has provided a template of unity and cohesion. The pressure to conform, the social sanctioning characteristic of previous generations has largely disappeared, and this signals not only new local opportunities for families such as the Takayamas (see Family section) - who can now bring up their child in a community they can help foster and build – but a new *type* of community structure.

As in Moon’s classic study, *From Paddy Field to Ski Slope* (1989), we see that emerging economic and social opportunities do not lead to the deconstruction of traditional forms of solidarity but instead give people the opportunity to reinvest in

social networks which may well be characteristic of communities many generations ago.

In the generational transitions of mobility on the community level, emerging freedoms have allowed new levels of conceptual linkage from the familial to the collective, and thus new forms of social life have arisen to provide for people embracing these possibilities.

In a world where not only is it the case that “parents are no longer guides but that there are no guides... (where) there are no elders who know what those who have been reared within the last twenty years know about the world into which they were born”, we could conclude, as Scherer does (1972), that the child will not find the traditional community a useful one in which to invest. However, we can see that it is the very remaking of a community type which required long-term investment into one that acts co-operatively in building a social structure from a wide diversity of people with no set amount of investment capital, that makes the *community of exposed solidarity* suitable to the needs of younger people.

Whether this newly configured local social entity can capture the imagination of enough young people to survive the previous generation’s destructive reinterpretation is the contemporary question. Certainly, the threads holding some of the families together in

some semblance of a community structure – and therefore involving the young and old in cross-family inter-generational communication - are fragile. But, for young families like the Takayamas and many others besides, in the middle of a run down Kyushu town centre, new imaginative commodities are readily available for purchase.



“Well, Aki has missed all the food,” said Kora as he stood from the table and made his way to the bar. We all got up one by one and made our way over to two large blue sofas that faced each other over a glass-top coffee table. Moto and I lit cigarettes and all responded to Kora’s call for “More beer anyone?” with enthusiasm.

Darkness had fallen some time before and with the subtle inside lighting of the studio cabin, the large windows served only to provide mirror images of our gathering; an effect that was quickly lost as car headlights became visible and reminded us that there was an ‘outside’ at all.

“Ah, Aki finally decides to grace us with his presence, hey?” commented Kumiko.

“I don’t know about *grace*,” said Moto eyeing Kumiko with a degree of disdain. “He just better not piss me off that’s all.”

Aki was Kora’s friend from ‘way-back’. Like Kora, he had lived in a village of relative poverty, but unlike Kora, had not made the same leaps of understanding himself in any conception of a re-configured Japan.

“It’s because he doesn’t have children,” said Kora to us all, speaking to our silent resignation about his imminent presence.

We all forgave Kora for inviting Aki – he was so obviously a lonely man in need of some company – even if, when in company, he often annoyed most of the group. He was the sort of man who would alienate people just for the sake of making himself look as though he was not on the sidelines. Ironically, it was this intensity of his need to be included that served to distance people from him – if not directly when they were with him, indirectly when they would talk about him with others.

But Aki, we all knew, was just as much part and parcel of the society that we discussed as Kora or Moto or Megumi or Kumiko. In a way, understanding and putting up with

him – as well as some futile attempts people had made to educate him– were ways to acknowledge Japan as a diverse society. Even if privately we all hoped he would soon fall unconscious with *shouchu* abuse, he represented a not uncommon blend of imaginative immobility and cultural identity that was understandable, if a little demoralising, for those with access to newer possibilities.

We heard a car door slam, and Aki's footsteps approach and pass through the downstairs door. Moto rose to his feet and made his way over to the stereo behind the bar. Quickly inserting a tape and pressing Play, he grabbed a bottle of Suntory Whisky from a shelf above the basin and poured himself a half-mug of the glistening brown liquid.

"Evening. Evening! Hi Aki! Al'right?" came the rather half-hearted greetings from us all as Aki became visible ascending the stairs into the open-plan room.

Uttering a wordless grunt of acknowledgement, Aki picked out a bottle of *shouchu* from a plastic bag and set it heavily on the coffee table between our two sofas.

"Hey Moto, grab us a glass!" he shouted over the bar.

“Right Oh,” came the reply.

He sat down beside me on a canvas-lined deck chair. I could sense his unease at momentarily attracting the attention of the group. Our eyes met for a brief moment as I attempted to acknowledge his appearance.

“Ah, a dodgy foreigner!” he exclaimed, cackling wildly, “Ha-RO! Mista Blues!”

“Hey, Aki, how are you?” I replied, attempting to mask the sarcasm which might well have influenced my tone.

“Oh, your Japanese has got so good! Yu drinku shouchu?”

“Sure,” I sighed inaudibly, “why not?”

“Moto! Grab another glass! We’re gonna see if this foreigner can drink *shouchu*!!” This last remark too was followed by an incessant cackling, which, by good fortune and

Moto's quick thinking, became overlaid with the serene and immediate sound of Ella Fitzgerald singing "A Paper Moon".

Say it's only a paper moon,

Sailing over a cardboard sea,

But it wouldn't be make-believe,

If you believed in me...

PART THREE—

Collective Identities

CULTURE

...if you believed in me...

Despite Ella's uplifting tones, I was uncomfortable. Having my cultural and/or racial differences pointed out and mocked was something that I disliked intensely. Recently, however, I had noticed that to give a foreigner this kind of treatment was becoming increasingly taboo. And this was great because if one was feeling vindictive it wasn't difficult to get a shot back at your assailant, quickly winning the sympathy of your audience by alleviating their discomfort.

The *shouchu* flowed and I knocked some of the liquid down.

"Look at that! A foreigner drinking *shouchu*!" exclaimed Aki, laughing with mock-disbelief.

I wasn't feeling vindictive, and I didn't want Aki's evening to begin with his being forced onto the defensive. So I played the part and made a funny wincing face as I took down the liquid.

There was a general chuckling from the others and guffaws of laughter from Aki as I seemingly confirmed his suspicions that foreigners were incompatible with this uniquely Japanese cultural commodity.

The others knew me well enough to see this gesture as one of generosity. And, after all, Aki was much older than I was, and one should be careful to respect and be kind

to one's elders. The banter continued, however, and I, for the moment at least, took on the role of outsider as Aki and the others revolved around some classic oppositional definitions. You like sake too don't you? And you eat well with chopsticks? You can eat raw fish?

Sigh.



Many foreigners who have lived in Japan have found the fact that they become marginalized as 'outsiders' difficult. It drove travel writer and long-term resident Alan Booth to such distraction that on one occasion, while walking the length of Japan, he had to bury himself in James Joyce, letting the Irishman's insightful and worldly observations remind him that there was a world and perspective beyond the one from which he felt excluded, but that nevertheless he called home.

This persistent need for many Japanese to identify and expose difference is, according to Valentine, a common technique to deal with 'outsiders'.

Marginal figures are often framed with each other, lumped together in an incoherent and undifferentiated category of "them", seen as collectively presenting a danger at the borderlines.

(1998: 9)

The Japanese, of course, are no different from anyone else in their construction of collective identity through sameness in reference to difference—"us" versus "them". Valentine's observations help us to see how such mechanisms become salient on the cultural level: how we play out the notions of our cultural sameness against identities commonly framed and constructed through opposition (see also Cohen, 1985, Carrier, 1995, Carrithers, 1992). But it has often been said, and not least by Valentine, that the way in which the differential is framed is, in Japan's case, particular. Here I will seek to explore the ways in which the framing of the cultural self in Japan has been particular, and in what ways it has been changing through the generations.

Before I continue, however, I would like to provide a brief reminder of one of the key themes discussed in Part One of this thesis: that local familial experience and collective identities give life to one another. In the last part *Familial Worlds*, we have seen how the influence of a changing collective understanding of Japan has divided three generations' visions of themselves with and against one another. As certain changes—modernity-driven—have occurred on the familial and collective levels, they have had profound effects on the way that people interact within and how they structure their lives and identities. Broadly, we have observed a generational reworking of the family system and community identity to allow for adaptable memberships and identities versus strict and uniform approaches. We have seen that to be mobile in contemporary Japanese society is to adapt and manage local diversity successfully.

Given the mutually defining nature of our local/global social worlds, we would expect, then, that these shifts in the *familial worlds* of Japanese life will have had

repercussions on the *collective identities* being produced—that the diversity characteristic of Japan’s locales may be being played out in the formation and direction of the collective imagination. In order to begin to understand whether this is indeed the case, and the consequences for collective Japanese identity if it is, we begin by asking how older people, who would characteristically move in “enclosed” communities³², imagine themselves as part of a Japanese cultural tradition, before moving on to explore how younger people who are part of “exposed” communities differ in their outlooks. Having done this, we turn in the second section to examine changing concepts of the *national* collective.

The ‘Japanese’ Cultural Self

Aki is a good vehicle through which we can broach some of the initial issues in presenting a “Japanese” self from an “enclosed” framework. For we clearly see Aki resorting to a “performance” of a character³³ of the Japanese as exclusive and unique, as a caricature embedded in groupism and collective action and identity. Aki perpetuates the validity of a Japanese collective self—through a marginalisation of other—further propelling the model’s applicability to circumstances in which the ordinary Japanese may find themselves. However, others in the “audience” might not have found his landmarks and points of identification contemporary, and there was a sense that we, the participants, had “allowed” Aki to perceive the situation as appropriate to his performance.

³² See section on Community in Familial Worlds for a discussion on enclosed communities.

³³ See Part One for a discussion on performance and identity formation, and Goffman, 1959.

Marginalising the outsider through appealing to an exclusive Japanese membership, while still common—again, see Valentine, 1998—is slowly becoming associated with older people who are less empowered to deal with a diverse society³⁴. Although Kora, (and the others slightly less so), could easily identify with the cultural identity Aki improvised within, to allow him to work within this construct of Japanese identity, was, one sensed, to be generous. There are, however—to digress briefly—people who seem to have so little access to imaginative mobility that to position themselves in their known wider cultural selves and narratives is their only freedom, even if those models are not the most dynamic or contemporary. Often we, as fellow participants, seem to know this implicitly, and therefore do not feel able to challenge the cultural selves (*personae*) in action, or to delegitimise the narrative base from which their performance is scripted. This is partly because to do so would be to discredit someone precisely at the point where they seek credibility – not the best opportunity to ‘educate’ – and also, partly because, as I have already hinted, to take on new expressions of cultural identity requires the confidence and experience to live a social reality that challenges the old, and many of us find it difficult to relinquish deeply personalised self-determining patterns of presentation.

With Aki, then, we see how the collective construct of ‘The Japanese’ is rooted in a notion of a communal persona enclosed within a particular cultural framework. For older people in general, however, rather than constructing identity vis-à-vis foreigners specifically, this sense of shared communal existence is more often performed through conversation about life in the day-to-day circumstances in which they find

³⁴ I have written about this in detail elsewhere (White, 2003), and will discuss further later in this section.

themselves. Hiro, an informant and friend and friend of mine, (43 years old), put it as follows:

“Older people will refer to who they are as members of a group first. As in ‘we would do that in this or that way’. They see themselves as individuals second and as group representatives first. So although they will talk about how they think and feel, their response will be about their community or family or whatever first. For younger people, it is who they are that comes first: ‘I prefer to’, ‘Well, I do this or that’. That is a huge difference.”

In answer to a question about how he thought this had come to be, Hiro continued:

“I suppose that it has a lot to do with the way that older people – well, at least my parents – see themselves as tied to the communities in which they lived. I mean imagine you’d been brought up in a world where not so long ago what one member did could affect the whole community. So that if you committed a crime, the whole community you belonged to would be seen as criminals. Admittedly, that kind of *tonarimura* (literally “next-door community”) mentality is older than my parents’ generation, but its influence still has a hold on them in many ways. You are first and foremost in charge of maintaining the groups standing and its relations with the outside world. What you do, think or say is of secondary importance.”

Hiro’s analysis is important. It shows us that not only is the notion of Japaneseness one that exists in the realm of collective imagination, but that it is also rooted in a common, experiential reality. The intimate experience which many older Japanese

have had of co-existing on the local levels of the family and community has become a kind of common marker for a shared sense of a way of life, and, by extension, a cultural collective. The one—community experience—comes to inform the other—Japanese cultural imagination—and then back again³⁵.

The power of this sense of a common local experience is such that to ‘be Japanese’ is often to speak directly to this ‘shared’ experience. Of course, we may have no idea if another person has had such a sense of commonality, but to allude to it, is nevertheless, to conjure the collective consciousness into being. Yoshino, (1992), explains this as follows:

...the conscience collective characteristic of pre-industrial kinship and community has expanded beyond its original sphere to form the solidarity principle of the industrial society of modern Japan.

(Yoshino 1992:89)

The imagined village and familial life of pre-industrial Japan now informs the construction of Japaneseness in social groups. So much is the notion of the single collective – or more accurately, of the individual’s experience within the collective -- alluded to in interaction, that Gerow, (2002) and McCormack, (1996), see the construction of Japanese cultural selves as containing a single, homogeneous, subjectivity.

³⁵ This seems, indeed, the hermeneutic circle in a constant revolution.

This single Japanese cultural self is modelled upon a kind of altruistic character who ‘instinctively’ knows the right course of action to be taken for the greater good, whose opinions represent the needs of the many, and whose outlook and worldview is firmly entrenched in an enclosed solidarity of membership that mirrors that of the small-scale community we identified in the last chapter, where outsiders are often seen as a threat, and social sanctioning means that interaction and membership has a kind of ‘knife-edge’ feel. Importantly, the Japanese cultural self exists in the singular – there is a common interpretation of what set of characteristics this cultural self adheres to and how it is performed; there is traditionally little room for improvisation, for improvisation suggests a spontaneous move away from collective.

This cultural self becomes useful at the ‘hard’, threatened end of structuring Japanese identity, so that we see Aki, challenged by a foreigner’s presence, resorting to it, but we may see a Japanese person of the same age merely gesturing to a way of life to which they feel connected (like Kora). So it is important here to understand the way in which cultural selves and the notions of cultural place have and are being used in Japan. We see them as identifiers and extensions of a common existence. They are calls to a way of life, a common experience of sociality and community membership. At least, this is what lies at the root of their conception and what is primarily alluded to when their points of identification are voiced in social settings.

Unfortunately, there have been two major, and initially damaging, consequences of this representation of the self in community in collective terms. The first is that foreign (and occasionally Japanese) social commentators have interpreted the calls to a common commune of Japaneseness as symptomatic of groupist ethnocentrism with

no sense of their individuality. The second is that, in order to define cultural narratives and to tackle feelings of inferiority as a racial group in the world, Japanese spiritualists, intellectuals and media agencies have picked up on the communal way of life and made homogeneous cultural and national narratives out of it. Both of these consequences have traditionally worked against understanding the Japanese as normal people involved in social life, and, of course, fed the respective growth of myth-making, so that outside commentators have labelled the Japanese as strange (or at worst inferior), and thus influential Japanese have needed to strengthen the idea that they are exclusive or even superior people. To this mutual definition and re-definition Befu (2001) gives the rather understated title 'Japan and the West: Mutual Misunderstanding' in a chapter of his book which deals with the issue.

If we look a little further into the first of these consequences – outside people seeing the Japanese as groupists – we see that countless commentators on Japan have attempted to understand the culture by seeing the Japanese 'self' as particular in some way or other. It has been described as:

... 'relative', 'collective', 'group orientated', and 'sociocentric' (and) of these labels, group orientation or groupism, as it is often called, has gained the widest currency. In the observation of many writers, the Japanese have such a strong group orientation that "an unkind commentator has likened the Japanese to a school of small fish, progressing in orderly fashion in one direction until a pebble dropped into the water breaks this up and sets them off suddenly in the opposite direction, but again in orderly rows.

(Kuwayama, 1992:121 quoting Reischauer).

However, could these commentators be speaking, not about the real selves of actual people, but the models of self presentation that these people have been exposed to? Could it be that the topic actually centres on the degree to which these models have been employed by people to deny a sense of separation from, or to express the notion that they are connected to, their collective? The question seems, at first, unanswerable.

Fortunately, more contemporary perspectives on Japan begin to unpack this, seeing that there is a difference between being a fish in a school and entering a group construct through individual motivation. So when we see Kuwayama (1992) talking about the ‘reference other orientation’ in Japan, and concluding that “relationality of the Japanese has often been emphasized at the expense of their individuality” (147), we are closer to seeing that the Japanese self is not somehow not-of-this-world, but that it is one that has often drawn heavily upon cultural selves in seeking legitimisation. Likewise, Hendry, (1992), illustrates a strong fostering – through socialisation -- of individuality in Japan, and points out that the emphasis on Japanese groupism obscures the fact that all societies blend the requirement for the individual to be part of the collective with space for individual expression (see also Springwood, 1992).

So in this we reaffirm³⁶ that selves are active participants in social life, drawing upon their creations of cultural selves and narratives. Thus cultural identity exists as a resource from which the individual can draw to participate, and so to be included, in

³⁶ See Part One.

social life (Carrithers, 1992; Goffman, 1959). But again, as well as being actors in and participants within, selves are also producers of social life. We create the cultural identities and worldviews within which we exist. And here we move closer to the second consequence of the Japanese cultural self: that around this core of common experience has been constructed a whole host of narratives which have attempted to add further layers of collective identity and meaning to “being Japanese”.

In attempting to understand the development of these narratives, I shall continue to see them as *resources* (for producing social life)³⁷ and reveal those that can be seen to be the miners and distributors—or cultural bearers³⁸--of these cultural understandings through time. We will attempt to understand how Japanese cultural identity has been forged and worked on, and, particularly, how it has consisted of narratives which see outsiders as somehow not-of-this-world. For although we have seen that it has been the experience of communal life that has fostered and encouraged the development of a single sense of ‘the Japanese’, this idea has been developed and built upon in many ways. To such an end, let us start by taking a trip back in time, to understand the precedents of a Japanese sense of cultural identity and self-presentation. Here I shall attempt to identify who has been in charge of the resource gathering, their motivations, and the types of narratives and models that have been mined and developed to give Japaneseness meaning and to give the performance of Japaneseness validity and place.

³⁷ See Machin and Carrithers (1996).

³⁸ I follow Yoshino in using the term bearers (1992).

From monks to media: traditional and modern approaches to mining and distributing Japanese cultural identity.

Jojin the monk's pilgrimage to China in 1071 from Japan was hardly a precise and routine affair. It seems that distances especially were not readily understood. Jojin had estimated the distance to be covered at 12,000 kilometres, a far cry from the 800 kilometres which separates the two lands. On arrival, and with seemingly no apparent ability to compute with the advantages of hindsight, the figure was put at between 20,000 and 28,000 km. This was an era where reaching other peoples' lands represented a considerable undertaking.

Arriving in the capital, Jojin was given a list of questions by the Chinese court. The court was interested in this foreigner, in the type of place he had come from and the culture he represented. Jojin would note these questions – and his answers – down in a journal he had with him, allowing us to read them almost 1000 years after the event:

Question: What are Japan's customs?

Answer: The Tang Dynasty forms the basis in our study of the civil and martial arts.

Question: How many residences are in the capital?

Answer: There are 200,000 houses. I do not know the exact number in the western and southern capitals [Daizaifu and Nara], but there are many.

Question: What is the population of the country?

Answer: I do not know how many countless billions.

Question: What is the king of your country called?

Answer: He is either called "emperor" or called "sage ruler".

Question: Do your families have surnames?

Answer: Our families have surnames. Fujiwara, Minamoto, Taira, and Tachibana are the most noble; time does not allow me to provide a detailed list of all the others.

Question: What is the genealogy of your people? [Jojin's note: the monk Sanzang said that this meant the names in the genealogy of the age of the gods and the age of men.]

Answer: In my land, the genealogy in the age of the gods consists of seven generations: the first is Kunitokotachi no Mikoto, the second is Izanagi-Izanami no Mikoto, the third is Ohirumemuchi no kami, who is also known as Amaterasu Omikami. When this sun goddess was first born, she became emperor. Later she climbed to the heavens and shone on the realm below which was therefore named the Great Japanese Nation (literally, "The Great Nation which is the Source of the Sun"). The fourth is Masakatsu no Mikoto, and the fifth, Hiko no Mikoto, who ruled for 318,542 years and was the eldest son of the previous king. The sixth was Hikohohodemi no Mikoto, who ruled for 637,892 years and was the second son of the previous king. The seventh was Hikonagisa no Mikoto who ruled for 836,042 years. Next was the first generation of human rulers, Jinmu Tenno, who ruled for eighty-seven years and was the fourth son of the previous king. The seventy-first generation is the present national ruler. All are descendents of the divine family.

Question: How far is your country from the land of the hairy people?

Answer: I do not know how far it is from the land of the hairy people.

(Borgen, 1998³⁹)

These questions and answers reveal a way of thinking about and imagining lands, culture and human history that is fascinating when compared to our contemporary models of explanation. Perhaps most striking is the way in which the exchange of information reveals both the Chinese and Japanese cultures as precariously constructed around mythical divinities and unknown demographic and geographical realities. The questions the Chinese pose are illustrative of their lack of information on a neighbouring people, and the responses Jojin offers are often improvisational to say the least. As Borgen (2000) points out:

For example, even the most rabid modern Japanese emperor worshippers would surely be pleased that Jojin emphasises the divine ancestry of Japan's royal family, but at the same time they would be rather puzzled by his version of the genealogy of the age of the gods, which appears to be a unique variation on the familiar creation myths from Japan's ancient histories, *Kojiki* and *Nihon Shoki*. Perhaps, as a devout Buddhist, Jojin was uncertain of the details and so improvised to produce a version that would seem more plausible, yet at the same time more impressive, to his foreign audience. This involved a mixture of both contracting and expanding on the details. Names of deities that may have seemed improbably cumbersome were contracted. Thus, for example, the deity whose various alternate names includes Masakaakatsukachihayabi Amanooshihomimi no Mikoto became simply

³⁹ I have altered some of Bordon's translations in this text.

Masakatsu no Mikoto. At the same time, reign lengths were wildly inflated.

Nowhere else does one find even deities credited with reigns in the hundreds of thousands of years, and even Jinmu is normally only given seventy-six years.

(Borgen, 2000, 6)

The precariousness of these cultural narratives, the fact they anchor themselves to seemingly flexible interpretations of their roots in time, space and the cosmos, illustrates the degree to which cultural identities have always been negotiated to fit and to express selves in particular contexts. More importantly, however, that Jojin illustrated an ability to improvise his cultural heritage within a wider concern to identify himself to another culture – and did so with a more than moderate degree of artistic license -- demonstrates that during this period the resource of cultural identity was a relatively new and underused one. Not only are the symbolic referents of heritage and divinity malleable and unformulated, but one has a sense that Jojin himself is attempting to find a meaningful interpretation of them.

This is perhaps more understandable if we see monks and priests as pioneering locators and miners of the cultural identity resource. Manipulating and structuring cultural narratives based upon an interpretation of the sacred and profane elements of life – and providing models of how they can influence our behaviours and approaches -- has always been the mainstay of monks and priests. To manage and distribute such meta-physical resources is the nature of their trade, and they have embarked upon their role with a key understanding of how they can involve ‘their people’ in the benefits of their mined resources, giving them sources of tradition, building blocks of cultural identity (see also Tsunoda et al., 1958).

In Jojin's contact and negotiation of his cultural identity with China, then, we see the beginnings of a historical construction of Japanese identity, one of many (and there are earlier) "striking examples of how the Japanese concept of self was born in the encounter with the Chinese..." (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993; see also Hall 1971). From the beginning of this shaping of its cultural identity through China, Japanese historical narratives revolve around essentialistic elements which are thought to be divergent, and therefore help to define self in relation to other. So while Japanese monks, priests and merchants (traditionally, those most exposed to Chinese culture) adopted features of Chinese civilisation, they felt the need to distinguish them as foreign in relation to some 'pure' Japanese core. After all, China was a huge empire, and Japan just a small archipelago so there was a need to carve out a sense of separateness, of distinctiveness in order not to be assimilated or consumed.

Linguistic tricks such as putting prefixes in front of imported concepts or things helped to illuminate some important distinctions, like putting *kara* – to represent China -- in front of anything with a Chinese origin: *karatoji* (book bound in the Chinese style), *karamono* (imported goods from China) etc.. These distinctions soon came also to relate to spiritual concepts, as revealed in the phrases *wakon kansai* (the Japanese soul and Chinese knowledge), and *wakan secchu* (combination of Japanese and Chinese ways). These and other distinctions, argues Ohnuki-Tierney (1993), represented a need to preserve the important notion of Japanese soul against incoming Chinese interpretations.

Much as the French now famously control the import of American English (and American things in general) in order to preserve and to structure themselves as

distinctively French, the Japanese monks and priests had begun a process of self-definition with and through a country that would remain their only significant other for many centuries.

The Japanese continued to shape their cultural identity in the light of such influences, adapting and contrasting the arriving concepts to a careful consolidation of their own collective construct. The core resource of cultural identity – the “self and other” relationship with China that was being mined and distributed by monks and priests (Tsunoda et al., 1958) – remained and was reflected in predominantly spiritual efforts to supply people with particular meta-physical understandings of their place in the wider cosmos. That is, at least, until more pressing and immediate needs to formalise this identity arose.

In the 14th and 15th Centuries, Japan’s internal economy entered a state of considerable growth. Connections to China had become much more common and trade was flourishing. Japan was gaining a sense of its own worth and autonomy in both its own eyes and those of the Chinese, as Hall explains:

Exports to China... artefacts such as refined copper, sulphur, folding fans, screens, painted scrolls, and above all swords... were now mass commodities... In return the Japanese ships returned with strings of cash (50,000 strings in 1454), raw silk, porcelains, paintings, medicines, and books. All of this gave evidence that Japan was no longer an underdeveloped member of the Chinese world order. In

fact the limited trade permitted by a reluctant China was eventually to prove too restrictive for the Japanese.

Hall (1993:126)

If a flourishing economy began to give Japan a sense of its own potential as a powerful, dynamic entity, then beginning to understand that the world was not only peopled by themselves and the Chinese would drive the need to formalise a Japanese cultural identity even further. Hall again:

After 1551 the tally trade (with the Chinese) broke down, and Japanese traders in unrestrained numbers began to ply the China Seas, only to be faced with competition from a most unexpected source. Already European traders had penetrated the Straits of Malacca and had made their presence known in the ports of Southern Kyushu. (1993: 126)

Contact with Europeans would challenge endeavours to create a Japan out of elements thought to be divergent with China. Suddenly, the task of the cultural bearers became all the more complex.

As long as the Chinese remained a well-defined other, the Japanese task of defining themselves vis-à-vis the Chinese was relatively easy. It became more difficult, however, when the world of the Japanese no longer consisted solely of the Japanese and Chinese. By the eighteenth century, the Japanese had become acutely aware of various Western civilisations.

Ohnuki-Tierney (1993; 103)

By the 18th century, if he was still alive, Jojin could have answered that his land was not only a particular distance from the hairy people, but that these people were presenting Japan with a whole new need to essentialise and formulate their cultural identity. As the Portuguese brought in firearms and soap, the Dutch, a highly impressive medical system, and the Germans and English, their science and technology, Japan was faced with the awkward prospect of trying to make sense of its so-far singularly defined cultural identity. It would have to be significantly broadened in order to allow people to understand in what ways they existed as not just Japanese in the context of a China and Japan, but as people (lumped together as Orientals by these new Westerners) in an international setting.

Perhaps it was to the primary need to build upon the distinctive collective heritage that they had developed alongside the Chinese, that those who concerned themselves with developing the Japanese cultural identity now turned. They did this in order to distance themselves further from the people of China and to boost their idea of themselves as an independent and unique people in the eyes of these new Westerners. Certainly we see, from the first contact with Westerners, how Japanese cultural bearers (which by now included intellectuals, political and military leaders and higher classes of samurai and bureaucrats , as well as monks and priests) begin to structure a cultural identity resounding with concepts of exclusivity, uniqueness, racial distinctiveness and ownership of a special native language.

This new force of cultural resourcing and distribution involved itself not only in the contemporary need to distinguish The Japanese from the West, but in a parallel effort,

to “extricate themselves from other Asians” (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; 103). One way in which this was achieved was by strengthening the age-old emphasis on the Japanese soul as distinct. And flowing from this notion came a plethora of concrete examples: Japanese rice was linked to the mythological narratives of Japan’s beginnings, so that to produce and consume Japanese rice was akin to worshipping the Shinto deities and repaying their blessings, whereas Chinese rice was “begun by the mandate of men... (and those who eat it are) weak and enervated” (Harootunian quoted by, Ohnuki-Tierney 1993: 104).

China began to be given the name Shina, which was the label used by other peoples. To do so ignored the Chinese representation of themselves as ‘the centre of the world’ or Chugoku, and therefore helped to solidify the new Japanese relationship as detached from their initial others. Such categorical changes signalled Japan’s new attempts to find an orbit within a world of many nations, and resulted in the strengthening of the notions of uniqueness to further define itself in this new international space.

Ousting other Asians from the development of Japaneseness was effective, but once in motion, this had to be bolstered by parallel attempts to distinguish themselves in the now broad spectrum of various colours and creeds. As early as the 16th and 17th century, a few Japanese people had encountered blacks and east Indians. These dark skinned men and women were primarily slaves who accompanied the Portuguese and Dutch traders to ports in Nagasaki. Because of the low status given to such people by the whites, the Japanese picked up the then current notion of blacks as subhuman, and readily adapted it to their own position as a racially distinct people in the wider world.

Such a positioning was still in action when, in the 19th century, “the Social Darwinism (of) anthropology and intellectual discourse provided a conceptual base upon which Japan could erect its own hierarchy of racial otherness...” (Russel, 1996: 21).

The influx of social Darwinism was timely and useful, and ideas related to the building of a social hierarchy built on racial characteristics were readily picked up and implemented. Indeed, biological evolution theory, although present in the late 19th century, was far overshadowed by Spencer’s calls to social evolution, which were seen as either “a new interpretation of the world based on ‘science’ or else as a simple slogan such as ‘victory of the superior, defeat of the inferior’ or ‘survival of the fittest,’ applied mainly to social problems” (Watanabe, 1976: 69). Thus the Japanese cultural identity became infused with the notion of a unchangeable sense of place and of a single homogeneity of race.

In Japan, the fact that “Darwinism was from the start an ‘eternal and unchangeable natural law’... applied without hesitation to human society” (pp74) meant that many Japanese cultural bearers soon understood that they were placed somewhere between Western whites and African blacks, in a ‘semi-civilised’ (Fukuzawa, 1875) Asian category. This categorical understanding helped to connect a relative vision of Japanese people to the new view of the world as many-peopled, and did so by ‘locking’ a view of themselves as a single homogeneous people in a world of other competing races.

But this put Japan’s cultural resource workers in a rather difficult position. Not only was this position of being a ‘semi-civilised’ people a rather awkward one to take on –

especially for those who would concern themselves with having a cultural identity, like the well-educated samurai, aristocrat and ruling classes (who of course, by anyone's standards, were extremely 'civilised') – but to begin to propagate such an identity would require the delegitimisation of a millennia-old tradition of mining cultural identity from the idea of being uniquely descended from a world of Gods. One could not be both semi-civilised and descended from divinity; the concepts clashed and this presented Japan's cultural bearers (the miners and distributors of cultural identity and cultural selves) with a real problem⁴⁰.

In many ways, the corresponding push for modernisation was a way to begin to find a path through the inconsistencies (Yoshino, 1992). If Japan was seen as a modern industrious nation then perhaps the Western countries would cease to provide the reflection of a second-class status? But this would require some sophisticated use of the cultural resource of collective identity while the modern nation was built⁴¹. With the coming of Meiji restoration, Japan's attempts to modernise and involve its people in a fully imagined nation-state, the resources of cultural identity and cultural selves, would need an efficient infrastructure, and therefore another phase of culture-building would have to be put in place. In order to begin to mine and distribute the required amount of resources, the Japanese culture bearers would need to reach right back into the roots of their identifications and histories, to tap their largest and most original supply: their divine Gods and their relationship to men.

⁴⁰ See Hendry, 2000, for some of the ways in which concepts of self identity were debated in the presentation of Japan at world expeditions.

⁴¹ Gluck (1985) sees that "from the time Japan began its deliberate pursuit of "civilisation in the mid-nineteenth century, (cultural) ideology appeared as a conscious enterprise, a perpetual civic concern, an affair, indeed, of state." (pp.3)

In November 1868 the (restored) emperor set out from the old imperial capital at Kyoto to visit his new one, recently named Tokyo... 'the silence that prevailed among the assembled multitudes (was) impressive in the extreme' (but) it would have surely struck the reader as astonishing that the palanquin that entered Tokyo in 1968, was, in fact, quite empty... That the emperor and the regalia were concealed from view is quite beside the point; the passage of the symbols of the imperial institution, rather than his person, signalled that that the world would never be the same... the framers of the Meiji constitution emerged with a theory of the state as living historical entity... (and enthroned a figure) 'completely outside the real political order as numen, as a pure symbol of the divine order'

(Smith, 1983: 23-4)

The new infrastructure of a cultural identity rooted in divinity and embodied in the state gave an increasing number of 'Japanese' people free access to a much more formalised collective resource, and importantly, this was a resource that attempted to override and challenge the notion of a semi-civilised people, and to reinforce the particularism of Japanese culture, its history and its divine roots. Within a few decades, having introduced forms of modernity which were to become some of the most economically successful in human history, Japan formally challenged the Western power elites from its reformed and strengthened position as a perceived equal. In 1919 a racial equality proposal brought to the Paris peace conference attempted to force an acceptance of Japan as non-white world power. The proposal was rejected by the League of Nations.

The proposal revealed Japan's fundamental attitudes towards... international society, which was perceived to be dominated by the Anglo-Saxon powers... (thus) the rejection of the proposal the Paris Peace Conference left an indelible mark on Japan and its post-war relations with the West. The rejection created much deeper psychological implications for the Japanese than has generally been assumed. It proved what the Japanese had always feared and suspected... that the West was unwilling to acknowledge Japan as an equal on the basis of race (and this) coloured Japan's attitude towards the world...

Simazu, (1998: 123)

The fact that Japan saw itself rejected by the West served further to strengthen the resolve to forge ahead with a cultural identity which allowed for heavy doses of cultural and racial determinism. Ironically, of course, this resolve displayed the very attitudes that the West had displayed towards Japan. It was this newly stated agenda to push itself further in to the fray of a battle for racial and cultural power that persisted into the subsequent otherings that would occur throughout the coming decades. Strategies of a racial kind became preoccupied with elevating the Japanese through distancing themselves from the 'darker' peoples of Asia (Dower, 1986), using anti-white and anti-Western rhetoric, and by attempting to consolidate even more formalised notions of "what it really meant to be Japanese" (Russel, 1996: 29; see also Befu, 2001). Indeed, so urgent was the need to negotiate a cultural identity that protected and re-enforced the story of a successful and worldly people, that to be marginalised due to the unalterable tenets of race, was to challenge the very legitimacy of the story, the civilisation, and the people themselves. The resulting anger shaped the world.

If we ask the reason for this (Second World) war, it lies in the (fact that) racial equality... demanded by Japan was not accepted by the powers. The discriminatory sentiment between the white and the yellow remains as always. And the rejection of immigrants in California. These were enough to anger the Japanese people.

Showa Emperor Monologue from Shimazu, (1998: 181)

Re-sourcing and re-shaping the cultural resources

Defeat in the Second World War shattered the nation spiritually and economically. After all, the pre-war culture bearers had been so successful that they had distributed their resources to the vast majority of the population, and thus many were affected in terms of the identifications engendered within them. Despite the turn of events, however, rather than attempt to reconfigure the nature of the resulting cultural identity – the kind of resource that it was and the kind of cultural selves it presented – it seemed to be generally, though by no means exclusively, thought that the people should recover and live to fight another day. The focus of mining and distribution was turned inward in order to stimulate recovery, and others became less acknowledged and important, as further expressions of uniqueness and exclusivity took over, this time within Japan itself.

The Japanese people forgot the Koreans and Chinese, living in (their) country as foreigners... (and) during this period (of economic and social introspection and development) regarded other people only in terms of economics: buyers or sellers of goods or services...

Nakano, (1995: 67-8)

In time, an internal focus on developing the cultural resources of identity and selfhood resulted in the appearance of hundreds of publications by a variety of academics, journalists and amateur intellectuals, each with a theory to explain the special qualities of Japan in contrast with the rest of the world. Many of these books became best-sellers, and many Japanese bookshops still have a category for these examples of *Nihonjinron*, or 'theories of Japaneseness'. Other media too—television and radio programmes—have picked up on some of the more original ideas, featuring interviews and information about the major contributors (see Befu, 2001).

At its heart, *nihonjinron* speaks to the theory of a single homogenised people sharing a single set of origins, social structure, and – as we have seen before in the making of cultural selves – personality traits. The Japanese are:

...proud and vain...haughty to the weaker but subservient to the stronger...
conformists...on the one hand tractable, conservative, fatalistic, and
authoritarian... and on the other hand curious, progressive, open, utilitarian and
pragmatic...

Befu (2001: 30)

Slowly but surely an introspective cultural identity concerning itself with the definition of Japaneseness as one kind of people sharing cultural characteristics became more and more formalised. As a result, the carefully forged notions of Japanese uniqueness were carried through to the general public by mass media and advertising agencies. Taking over the mining and distribution of cultural identity, these effective mouthpieces further organised and ordered the key precedents of Japanese cultural selves, Japanese origins and Japanese as humans in relation to other races and nations and peoples. Anthropologists have since been picking up the threads:

Representations of the gaijin (white people) other (in advertising) create and highlight contrasting statements about the specialness of being Japanese. Among the essentialized self-orientalisms created are Japanese assertions of uniqueness and cultural homogeneity.

Creighton, (1995; 137)

These efforts to define and ratify an exclusive Japanese cultural identity have not just been conducted in the subjective worlds of mass media and advertising, but, more formally, in the 'objective', 'scientific', analysis of origins:

The continual and contextual distortions in media presentations to construct a set of origins' images for mass consumption reveals the extent and intensity with which the masses identify with the elevated consciousness of being inherent in the message... For the average individual, the vision of racial uniqueness which blends socio-political and biological evaluations is a highly meaningful and

rational one, enabling the transcendence of the realities and limitations of personal history and the recovery of a highly satisfying rewarding sacred time.

Oblas (1996: 168)

Japan's cultural voyage

Since Jojin went on his pilgrimage to China, the Japanese cultural identity has been developed carefully as a resource to feed its population, to prop them up in a consummate understanding of themselves in the world. The narratives and models of self-presentation that this identity has rendered useful for such positionings have worked well to provide spaces for many countless billions of social exchanges between Japanese and non-Japanese, and amongst Japanese themselves. In so doing, we can see that although “Japanese culture has been worked on by history, both native and foreign, by Buddhism, Confucianism, and even at times by Christianity... underneath the changing surface it has never quite let go of its oldest native roots...” (Buruma, 1995: 3).

These roots are not related exclusively to the fact that Jojin's efforts – and others like his – would have been concerned with allowing people a space (a sacred time) in which to place themselves in history, but also work on the premise of origins, and of uniqueness. In the modern day, this sense of uniqueness is further enhanced, however, as narratives now exist which pitch different races and creeds against one another to provide a myriad of reflections on the Japanese people. These reflections have been used primarily to stress and emphasise the special nature of the Japanese, and,

appropriately, a single cultural self which displays the scripted characters of 'groupism' and serves further to solidify the collective and thus its self-image.

In the shaping of this cultural identity, and in providing a seemingly infinite supply of its resources through a well-built and formalised infrastructure, the view of the world engendered has been turned slowly inward, almost as if in response to multiple threats, to the refuge of an ethnocentric core. Where once Jojin and others like him would have travelled to China in the hope of bringing back useful additions to the cultural landscape of identity, now the media engages in a highly formalised distribution of the identity's uniquely cornered position. People like Aki identify with the embedded narratives, and perform the associated cultural selves, and almost all Japanese understand what is going on and what is meant and referred to by such performances.

Jojin might now say in response to the question posed by the Chinese in 1071 that 'we are a long way from not knowing who the hairy people are, and much closer to understanding how they can help us to produce meaningful expressions of collective solidarity'.

In a world that has been shaped by the attempts to link personhood with a notion of culture – to say that the Japanese people are this or that type of person; that they share a common and unique set of racial and cultural identifiers – the Japanese people have had access to particular resources. But in the fact that such narratives emphasise particularism or differentness over universalism or sameness, and leave the individual suspended in an enclosed conceptual frame of time and space, have they been seen by younger people as somehow outdated? In a world where we have seen diversity

become the common social experience, and multiple unbounded connections come to define the community, surely a collective cultural identity stressing homogeneity is no longer a sustainable resource for producing social life? This now becomes our question.

Increasing diversity and pluralism in youth society

“If someone offered me – completely free – the choice between a top of the range Mercedes-Benz with a Saga number plate, or a crappy old beaten-up Toyota Corolla with a Fukuoka plate, I’d take the Corolla. I wouldn’t be seen dead in a car with a fucking Saga plate!! If I see’em on the road I almost always think ‘Tosser!’”

Mato-san followed this attack on people from Saga-prefecture with a hearty and good-natured laugh. We were in a crowded bar in Kurume – a city on the border of Fukuoka and Saga prefectures – with a variety of Mato’s work colleagues and other regulars.

“Hey?” piped up Tomi from behind a large mug of frothing beer, “I’m from Saga, man! Who do you think you are, you poncy Fukuoka scum!!”

This was met with guffaws of laughter all round. Tsuka, a young salaryman in his early twenties turned to me and said, “I’ve never heard that about Saga people before – great stuff!”

Nether had I, in fact, and the exchange made me put certain other observations into perspective. The world for many of the young people I met and observed on the southern island of *Kyushu* comprised a very plural reality. This was a social environment where competing regional visions of themselves fused with creative, dynamic, stylistic canvases of what they could be (see Part Two, community). The creation of cultural identity seemed founded upon a wide choice of possible options, and the cultural selves that related to them also seemed wildly diverse—the narratives from which they sprung freely imaginable and open to improvisation. This was no culture of homogeneous “single self” subjectivity; this was a dynamic internal mix-match of collective identities. Let us get closer to understanding this pluralism by taking an in-depth look at the young Takahiro:

Takahiro

Takahiro is 21 years old. To even an uninitiated foreigner he looks ‘cool’. His good looks are not the only indicator of his popularity; he also manages to emanate a collectedness and sense of the street-wise. But in all this self-presentation, he draws heavily on forms of regional distinctiveness.

“My Kyushuness is important to me, sort of gives me a sense of being rooted somewhere. But it is not a narrow thing, doesn’t hinder me in any way, it makes me stronger, more connected. Some people, especially in Tokyo, can look down on other regions in Japan as somehow not civilised, but I am a Kyushu-Danji [Kyushu man] first and Japanese second. I don’t try and pretend that I am part of a purely Japanese tradition – there are all kinds of Japanese – and I am from Fukuoka, Kyushu.”

There are elements in Takahiro's construction of himself as a composite picture of locality and nationality which suggest that he has been 'in charge' of the assembly of his collective identity. He contrasts himself against a "pure" Japanese tradition which acts as a pre-made template. His behaviour and attitude too give us clues as to this individually-led production.

His attitude is cool and detached, modelled very much on the types of interaction we observed in Nobu and Daisuke in Part Two, where the individual has seemingly already computed all the necessary forms of response to any initiation of conversation, and then plays them accordingly. Takahiro adds to this the image of the Kyushu-Danji a culturally modelled persona of the male as dominant and in control (traditionally of women). But even this "traditional" image or role of masculinity is picked up and modified. Originally a "hard-man", a Kyushu Danji now gives Takahiro a model of masculinity which he manipulates to his emotional benefit. The security received in placing oneself in such a tradition conversely allows for kindness and compassion, and thus the Kyushu-Danji is made into a gentle and understanding man – a composite and learned result of a long history of debating and experiencing manhood.

Rather than resulting in an arrested or confined persona, I wish to argue that such models give people a range of choices in both the presentation of self, and in parallel to this, of cultural membership. Rather like Mathews' (2000) analysis of choosing cultural identity from a larger 'cultural supermarket', we can see that, as on the level

on fact-to-face community interaction, young people are interacting with the surrounding cultural—imaginative—world as consumers with an array of choices⁴².

What is particularly revealing in Takahiro's case is that he is not even from Kyushu originally, but from Kyoto. His parents moved to Kyushu when he was seven years old, and his family has no roots whatsoever in the southern island where they now make their lives.

So Takahiro is not reaching into some reservoir of ancestral narratives and identities in his construction of himself as a Kyushu-Danji, nor is he drawing on some related mythical notion that this place is his territorial cultural space (Wise, 2000). His is a carefully constructed notion of his own sense of place that makes no apology about being a construction. He is quite happy to talk in terms of himself as a Kyushu-Danji, and yet to talk about his early life in Kyoto as if such an upbringing poses no threat at all to his through-and-through Kyushuness. How can this be understood?

What at first seems to be a paradox is made clearer by understanding that there is an inherent malleability in the construction of such identities by youth. Indeed, if there is a key concept to be advanced here it is that of choice. Takahiro can, in short, be whatever he wants. But by taking on – and in many ways constructing for himself – a composite picture of Kyushuness, he reveals a diversity of approaches to acting out identity in a diverse array of social possibilities. Thus his identity is set in a wider Japan of many such choices to bind to a region and a persona (or set of personae). That he has chosen to be 'from Kyushu' is incidental to what his identity is, in actual

⁴² Again, this reminds us of the hermeneutic process as local face-to-face diversity gives way to a pluralisation of cultural selves and models.

fact, negotiating – the construction of itself within a diverse and plural imaginative continent.

That Takahiro chooses to be a Kyushu-Danji thus illustrates not particularly his Kyushuness, but the extent to which he ‘needs’ an identifier of diversity to exist in a diverse world. The fact that his is obviously such an individual and spontaneous interpretation of regional characteristics reflects how this ‘wider world’ is a malleable and free – if you’ll allow me – zone of cultural improvisation.

Thus Takahiro’s playing out of cultural selves (the Kyushu Danji) represents his worldview (as a varied, plural and diverse place). But unlike the kind of selves that we have seen developed in the past – resources crafted and distributed by agencies – Takahiro is very much at the forefront of his own portrayal of his world and his place within it. He mines and manages his own resources, and although he does so to further ensconce himself in the world he experiences, both his creations and his perceptions of this world are characterised by diversity, and a determination to propel forward into life the notion that Japan is a plural, and not a singular, container for cultural expression.

His resulting regionalism is particularly contemporary, not only within the wider patterns of Japanese cultural change, but also within the context of the development of complex cultures and societies in general. Where in the United Kingdom recent debates on devolution and calls for taking on regional senses of collective identity are ever-present, many people all over the world are coming up against the problem of where to fit themselves into local, national and global contexts. Europe as a whole is

a hotbed for such re-negotiations (see Pok et al., 2002). Young people therefore seem to be attempting to recreate a sense of locality – picking up and reintroducing traditions, while at the same time bringing into existence a completely new notion of themselves, as collectively plural, in their interaction between, and the interplay of, local, national and global conceptions.

In Japan, these efforts have a traceable and identifiable pattern: we can see that an overall understanding of cultural uniqueness has given way to a more popular discourse – that of distinctiveness, regional and otherwise. It is perhaps in constructing relativised local identities that offer spaces for the expression of local distinctiveness that allows (predominantly) younger people to slot into a wider cultural identity which has plurality as its most defining narrative assertion.

Cultural Pluralism

As we observed in the community section of *familial worlds*, the nature of young people's models for interaction has changed significantly from geographically bounded to stylistically defined entities. Flowing out from this significant transformation of the social order is a corresponding need to find consolidation in the cultural realm – to reflect their changed social realities in the collective construct of what it means to be Japanese. In attempting to construct this new entity – to provide for themselves an up-to-date set of resources – young Japanese are certainly not devoid of other historical attempts to reform and uproot the status quo.

In particular, an intellectual by the name of Yanagi was thinking in terms of plurality and diversity as symbols of strength and unity throughout his lifetime (1889-1961).

As one of Japan's earliest advocates of the need to preserve and encourage cultural diversity, Yanagi opposed the nationalists who instigated the 'family state' and the making of Koreans into Japanese in the 20's. In the late 30's, Yanagi urged the Ainu and Okinawans to resist integration with the centre (Steele, 1995). Yanagi's ideas of accentuating the "peripheries" of the monocultural narrative—challenging the centre by attempting to integrate its "others"—were ahead of their time; around 70-90 years ahead.

Accentuating the peripheries today

Every summer on a stretch of beach to the west of the city of Fukuoka a three-day reggae festival takes place. It attracts thousands of young people from all over the prefecture and beyond. The festival is one of perhaps 20 of its scale that occur all over Japan during the summer months. Many of the younger people who attend manipulate fashion styles and their bodies in a way that transforms them into "non-Japanese" in the eyes of their elders. Hair styles and make-up that model Afro-Caribbean racial characteristics, and fashion styles which draw on a vast range of different country's cultural traditions are the norm at these gatherings. In the various ways in which young people interact in the stylistic ways we have identified in Part Two, and, more importantly, in the range of musical and cultural influences upon they draw to organise these interactions, they too accentuate the peripheries to a homogenous cultural identity in order to begin to delegitimise it (see also Miller, 2003 and White & Mathews, 2003).

Not only is it the case that revivals in once ‘peripheral’ Okinawan and Tohoku music—regions of the Japanese islands themselves—have been led by the well heeled and diverse tastes of the young (rather than a protective fervour of the older people), but also when local musicians (of any genre) become famous, they often talk in interviews about their home regions as containing key experiential and inspirational ingredients which facilitated their successes. Such analysis serves to further legitimise the regional identities of Takahiro and his contemporaries, ordering them around key landmarks of identification and adding to the ability to further represent this internal diversity.

For young Japanese, it is an involvement in their diverse social realities, and the corresponding need to craft a collective vision which legitimises these realities, which most pervades the construction of cultural identity and cultural selves. In so doing, can Japan’s youth persuade us to see that they are breaking down the collective resources of the older generations and replacing them with their own more individually-led solutions? Is cultural homogeneity really being actively displaced by a cultural pluralism that is other-inclusive? In order to help us continue to investigate this question, I turn to present another short case study:

Tsuka

“I used to have a really bad *gaijin* [foreigner] complex,” says Tsuka, averting his eyes from me for only a brief second in apparent embarrassment. “Must have been up until

around 17 that I would feel quite inferior to foreigners, nervous even, unable to see them as people, I suppose, just as kind of images.”

Tsuka, one of the most articulate and intelligent young people I came to know in my Kyushu town, had taken me quite by surprise. Not only was he more able than many others to talk to me without any detectable sense of our cultural or national differences, but his mind always seemed to me to be firmly placed in the world of education – he was a young high school teacher. The idea that he would have somehow thought of himself as tied to an older and seemingly less-secure notion of Japaneseness in the world was laughable considering his age and apparent freedom and interest in knowledge and learning.

I laughed incredulously, “You’re joking!” I exclaimed, my closeness to him being revealed in my inability to see him as a different, less-empowered, persona.

“No, it’s true.” He laughed along with me. “In fact it wasn’t until quite recently that I managed to shake off all of my gaijin-complex trappings.” We both smiled broadly and I reached for a can of beer, topping up his glass. Repaying the compliment, his face gained a sturdy composure; he shifted slightly in his chair and said,

“I think it was seeing my friends come back from travels and visits abroad that changed me. They acted all kind-of cool and stuck-up, like they’d had some sort of advantage over those of us that hadn’t been there.

“I wasn’t having any of that. There is just as much going on – just as much variety of life, hardship, happiness and all the rest of it in Japan – and that finally made me question what all this inferiority towards foreigners was about. I was like forced into defending Japan as my world, as just as interesting and diverse as the ones that they had been to. It is weird, but that’s how it came about. And I haven’t even thought about gaijin as somehow different since.”

Tsuka’s transitional phase, out of the identity propagated by older people and into one in which he controlled and determined, was interesting and I was more than lucky to have it confided to me. What is so prominent is the fact that it was his everyday exposure to a deeply diverse Japan that prompted him to reconsider his place in a wider tradition of sameness and difference. What could possibly be so special about other worlds that would make them somehow better than his own? (It is a thought that could often do with being understood in reverse by those who assert cultural superiority). But it was also a proactive realisation that related not only to his perception of the outside gaijin other, but also to the external presentation of a somehow ‘unique’ Japan.

In order to make his realisation complete, his Japanese identity needed to be reconfigured as diverse in order to be able to allow for the disassembling of the gaijin other from its key precedents. In so doing, Tsuka transposed an internally relativised template of understanding onto others in external world, and, by extension, onto his sense of his own cultural identity, releasing it from its position as the primary resource for his collective cultural identity.

The conceptual leap is self-fulfilling in that understanding that there is nothing ‘special’ about foreigners also illustrates that there is nothing ‘special’ about ‘the Japanese’, but rather that they are both local examples among many forms of human life. Such transitions in the use and experience of others represent more general trends for young Japanese who, in many ways, are perceiving internal diversity as overriding and pervading models of externally presented uniqueness.

Multiplying cultural selves

...it is only by recognising the internal presence of foreignness that one can avoid projecting on to the foreigner all that we find dangerous or unpleasant in ourselves, and it is only with the knowledge that we are “foreigners to ourselves” that we can attempt to live with others – so that, by recognising the “foreigner” within us we are spared detesting him in himself.

(Kristeva, from Morley, 2000: 222)

Kristeva gives a succinct explanation of how the recognition and consolidation of diversity on the local level pluralises the collective imaginative construct. If we look closely, we can suggest that within Tsuka’s model of understanding, what has occurred is the re-orientation of thinking about his fellow Japanese as sharing a single selfhood – one that worked on extension of Japanese commonality – to understanding that there are multiple interpretations and expressions of the self, and that the cultural self readily presented in Japan is merely one of many. Thus what pervades this

understanding is the notion that multiple selves—or “foreignness” and diversity within—is the reality.

Anthropologists of Japan have predicted that youth can be seen to consolidate an increasing internal diversity and then express it in collective terms.

It is the teens themselves who have, with some confusion and discomfort, come to terms with a consciousness of diversity and it is this diversity among teens themselves, in family life, buying power, sexual and interpersonal experience, political and personal ideas – that will indeed be the basis of new thinking on the nature of Japanese society.

White (1994: 221)

How can we see that this new thinking on the nature of Japan is now characterised by cultural narratives which reflect diversity and go against single homogenous Japanese “selves”? One way is to examine how ‘internal’ diversity comes to inform the way in which young people see themselves in the context of other peoples and races, as from this observation of an informant:

“Like, so you think that people are the same everywhere? That personality is what makes us really different, and that race doesn’t make certain types of people? Huh, yes, that makes sense, sort of depends on the person. Well, if I think about it, then, yes, I suppose that makes sense. I know some pretty strange Japanese people after all. And I met this really nice New Zealand guy once....”

Reiko was conducting a conversation with a friend of hers at a coffee shop in the town of Kurume. Her friend had just returned from Bali where she had spent some time socialising with local people. The exchange was interesting, not just in its illustration of working through the old narrative of Japaneseness being an all-pervading entity of the mind, soul and body, and replacing it with one slowly anchoring itself in cultural pluralism rather than determinism, but in the fact that such exchanges are part of a common youth discourse of negotiating a “single” Japanese subjectivity against the possibility of integrating “multiple” subjectivities.

Reiko (34) is good representative of the kind of informants whom I observed consolidating this set of observations on race versus culture. Overwhelmingly, part of what the Japanese media called the *shinjinrui* (new species) generation, she is suspended between the dynamic stylistic existence of Japan’s youth, and the more traditional structured one of her parent and grandparents. She is obviously aware of the narratives of uniqueness and inferiority/superiority which embody “The Japanese Self”, but also of the perceived freedom from such understandings that the youth generation personifies.

The degree to which this negotiation of a single Japanese subjectivity on the one hand—older generation’s models—and multiple subjects on the other—youth generation—forms a dialogue between Japanese people of this generation is substantial and far-reaching. In interviews with Japanese returning from visits to foreign countries, such considerations were almost uniformly discussed and commentated upon.

“It’s weird, but my time in the Philippines has made me realise that “Japanese people” are no different from anyone else.” (Keiko, 29)

“I have only just understood, I think, that culture shapes people—and that there a range of personalities in every culture—and that there is no such thing as a “Japanese”” (Rei, 35)

“What does it mean to be “Japanese” anyway? Some people seem to think they know, but I can’t work it out!” (Yoshi, 27)

Also, as interesting as some of these reports I elicited, are perhaps my observations of younger Japanese people talking to each other. As in the example above (Reiko), young people demonstrate a consistent and wide-spread concern to make these new understandings of race/culture, single/multiple selves concrete through interaction and negotiation of new narratives and landmarks with like-Japanese. There is a constant reaffirmation and consultation going on between young people around these central discourses, and it is one that overwhelmingly reflects the rejection of a single Japanese model of a cultural self in favour of one which stresses multiplicity and pluralism.

“To be a “Japanese” doesn’t mean that much to me anymore. It tends to get in the way of being myself around foreign people, and I don’t like that. Like I made this friend called Refer in India and he was more considerate of our group than any of the other Japanese people there! And I thought—what a load of crap this whole idea of being a “Japanese” is!” (Kei, 28)

“Um... that’s interesting!” laughed Kei’s friend. “Yes, we tend to think that “Japanese” people are considerate or whatever... yes, that’s interesting...”

The cultural selves of younger people still—approaching or only just in their 20s—were harder to observe because of the degree to which they had moved beyond this understanding of themselves as somehow caught between the single self on the one hand and multiple selves on the other. So much was the cultural imagination open to improvisation and based on a wide variety of possibilities that the only way we can gain an insight into their cultural identity relative to older people’s notions is, I suggest, through understanding how they define their elders as different from themselves.

What is immediately apparent here is a constant distancing of themselves from ‘old’ ideas, worldviews, wisdom and styles of the older generation. Various, the word *Oyaji* [old man] is used not just with reference to a person, but to a whole way of perceiving the world in homogeneous or ‘limited’ terms. Typically, *Oyajis* are those who identify with the village-like Japanese mentality, who are unsure of the meaning of ‘non-Japanese’ words which display common global concepts such as “globalisation”, “identity”, and a whole range of others related to everything from music to travel to other activities. *Oyajis* are, in short, not like you and me because they see themselves as positioned in an old world which limited experience and understanding of new possibilities. Their vision of Japanese culture, and their performance of traditional Japanese selves is outdated, and, quite frankly, embarrassing.

“I met this guy the other day from Fukuoka and he was a real *Oyaji*. He was only about 30-odd but he kept going on about baseball and how “we Japanese” have some special talent and spiritual connection with the game. What an asshole!” (Jun, 28)

As a short aside, it must be said that in the confines of Kora’s cabin, Aki certainly was an *Oyaji*. But as I have mentioned before, we let him perform his out-dated script. Also the young people present all came from a rural part of Japan where they are surrounded and embedded in the lives and influences of older people with older views. Thus, in Kora’s cabin, in the Oita mountain range, Aki’s presentation could be acknowledged as possibly valid and legitimate, given the rural disposition and age-range of the surrounding population. However, if we had been in a bar in the trendy Omote-Sando area of Tokyo, he might not have been permitted to continue along his script, at least not in the present company.

Whatever the location of Japanese cultural identity construction, what we can identify is the general disassociation of self-presentation from the cultural deterministic elements inherent within a singular homogeneous cultural narrative. As Japanese like Tsuka begin to need to consolidate internal diversity with the established models of homogeneity, such pluralism takes the form of acknowledging a multiplicity of selves. Like Takahiro, Japanese become embroiled into the plural tapestry as one of those diverse selves attempting to exist in the plural, diverse collective.

Despite the fact that the key narratives of a Japanese social Darwinism/Spencerism have remained a powerful discourse until the present day, younger people are

becoming increasingly distant from their utility as resources for the production of social life. While people in the late 20s and early 30s seek to negotiate a way through these narratives towards ones which better reflect their ongoing experience of cultural pluralism, many very young people have never engaged with their key precedents, never made them their own. But in setting themselves apart from the general notions that accompany these expressions of cultural identity, the young in general show themselves to be in pursuit of a cultural identity underpinned by the strong (flexible) foundations of a more relevant pluralism.

Making Diverse Collectives

The production and demonstration of alternative cultural narratives and selves that put forward pluralism do not just occur through face-to-face youth interaction and negotiation. There are many ways in which such interaction influences and becomes salient in the popular cultural agencies and organisational frameworks of contemporary Japanese society. One of the ways in which these more diverse imaginative constructs are being propelled into a collective vision of a plural Japan can be seen in the way that a whole new generation of Japanese film directors are interested in achieving the representation of their society as consisting of many kinds of selves, and/or 'others':

Recent Japanese cinema's attention to 'others'... does not stem simply from a recognition of new 'others' in Japanese society; it is an effort to acknowledge that there are 'others' who do not fit dominant Japanese definitions of identity and thus

are not knowable in the usual ways... since these 'others' can be other Japanese, recent cinema also recognises difference within Japan on the ethnic and even individual level, breaking up a homogenous Japan by rejecting assumptions that all Japanese share a mutual self-understanding.

Gerow (2002: 6-7)

In these new cinematic efforts we see concerted efforts to formalise the opening up of single Japanese subjectivities, to provide a collective cultural expression for cultural pluralism.

These transitions of understanding the cultural presentation of self and the infinite variety of personalities in culture are also displayed in the commodification of foreign culture. Here, previously foreign commodities become integrated into a diverse matrix of possibilities by youth culture in general.

Seeing that:

The children of the industrialists, executives and labourers who built Japan Inc., are as accustomed to hamburgers as onigiri (rice balls), Gun N' Roses as ikebana (flower arranging), and are often more adept at folding a bindle of cocaine or heroin than creasing an origami crane...

(Greenfield, 1996)

is to begin to understand the degree to which previously labelled 'outside influences' are made part of a broad and diverse youth reality.

Although in my research I found very little drug use amongst young people, Greenfield's observations help point to the fact that for young Japanese an array of choices abound. Previously, researchers have commented upon the way in which foreign foods and products have existed within a symbolic category of otherness. This is not the case for Japan's youth. Indeed, there is a whole mass popular culture (Martinez, 1998), which exists to allow young people to choose from a variety of products, both imaginative and real.

The heritage of distinction of the 'foreign' commodity is obvious in the etymology of descriptive terms—there is a whole script, *katakana*, dedicated to converting foreign terms—part of wider historical efforts to define Japan vis-à-vis the outside world. But in just the way that the town Oxford no longer conjures up images of cattle crossing a river, previously introduced foreign commodities labelled as 'foreign' have become integrated into the day-to-day experiential range of products, both conceptual and real. The way in which this mass popular cultural supermarket (Mathews, 2000) is 'shopped' is vastly different over generational borderlines.

One way in which we can see this is that the incorporation of the previously unfamiliar into the known world is, as we would expect, characterised by a loss of symbolic significance attached to such products. Therefore, we observe the shift by understanding how older people do, and how younger people do not, attribute signifiers to particular commodities. So, typically, going to a restaurant with older Japanese people will illicit enquiries as to whether the foreigner would prefer bread to rice with their meal. Younger people, however, (although if they think about the

distinction between the two foods they would of course understand the question and its significance), consume both commodities with little or no regard for the symbolism once attached to them. Therefore to ask a foreigner if they wanted bread instead of rice would be to lift themselves out of a social reality defined by abounding choice into an imaginative framework they implicitly consider (and experience as) outdated.

Interestingly, as further evidence for the degree to which these commodities hurdle 'established' boundaries of "Japaneseness" or "foreignness", I have often been presented with cultural commodities that I have felt to be outside my own global set of understandings. So the examples – particularly musical styles which have been incorporated into the Japanese youth culture -- represent to me an level of abstraction from my own world which categorises such things as exotic where in young Japanese understandings such commodities are well integrated parts of a known experiential whole.

Talking about Japanese office ladies (OLs for short), Kelsky makes a related point.

Things Western are not merely coveted, however; that was the case for earlier generations for whom foreign goods were seductively exotic. Now, Western goods are contained as signifiers within a largely self-sufficient OL universe of style and status; the West has been "domesticated", to the extent that it is Japan itself that is now, for this generation, exotic and alien...

(1996: 177)

Cultural commodities are thus wildly diverse and hold a variety of overlapping relationships. And the way in which they exist to prop up and represent the plurality of the youth experience helps us gain further insight into the world as it is perceived and categorised by young people—a diverse reality with multiple options and choices.

We have seen how the sense and quality of culture has mirrored the transitions in the community, moving from a communal enclosed sense of solidarity to a consumed plural one. The notion of choice and of consumption – of aspects of culture being commodities in a marketplace – is one picked up by Martinez, (1998): “...popular culture (and not just in Japan) is not only mass culture, the culture of the imagined community: it is culture consumed, and consumed in various ways, by different people.” (pp 6).

This is an important point which reflects the increasing internal diversity that I have made reference to earlier in this chapter. If we see that people ‘shop’ for representations of self, of regional identities, of cultural selves and narratives, then we can see the degree to which this ‘market’ of ‘products’ comes to define the nature of their activity (of shopping) and thus their collective. This is to say that it is the market (mass popular culture, to give it one name, or the cultural supermarket to give it another) itself which becomes the representation of a collective based on pluralism (Mathews, 2000; Clammer, 2000).

Thus we can see that our contemporary senses of cultural place and identity need to be incorporated into the imagination of the cultural collective. And in the deconstruction of the local – characterised by bringing regionalism and plurality to the fore – or of

global – through re-configuring the nature of self and other – cultural identity is disengaged from culturally specific models of understanding, becoming concerned instead with negotiating new multi-contextual, multi-cultural realities. It is this negotiation of the plural in our lives that then comes to give the collective a kind of new basis for social interaction:

Such ‘multi-culturalism’ imparts to youths, as to adults, a degree of consciousness that goes beyond any one situation, an awareness that each moment is embedded within a range of cultural possibilities.

(Amit-Talai, 1995: 231-232)

This ‘degree of consciousness’, the ability to form points of reference spontaneously that we then use for the creation of the social collective and as narratives and selves for the improvisation of interaction, represents a new technique in the production of social life based on common diversity.

We can see, in a sense, how far such cultural production is from the traditional one-subjective Japanese view, and suggest that we have seen how “The end of one particular identity of ‘Japan’ constructed around a single subjectivity (has) open(ed) the way to the fulfilment of multiple subjectivities, the flourishing of many ‘countries’...” (McCormack, 1996: 283).

Importantly, in the making of this new plural cultural identity, there is no perceived point of time, no marker for the beginning of the collective which is dictated by myth or ‘ideas of origin’. The collective template has become so flexible that people

literally carry narratives and landmarks with them, anchoring them to the soil of whatever context they find themselves and moving on from there. Amit-Tamil expresses this well:

Youth cultural production occurs at home, at school, at work, at play, on the street, with friends, teachers, parents, siblings and bosses, draws elements from home-grown as well as transnational influences, and intertwines with class, gender, ethnicity and locality with all the cultural diversity that such a multiplicity of circumstances compels.

But part of this puzzle is in the fact young people are forming intra and inter cultural liaisons in their everyday lives (we have seen this in Part Two's community). They are attempting to consolidate their new diverse and plural world with their elders, the world at large, and their social realities. Not only are their diverse worlds beginning to inform this liaison position, but in its involvement of a mass youth culture that transcends national boundaries, demand it. Thus young people are empowered into the same positions as their Jojin-like ancestors, to comment upon and to forge the cultural identity in order further to supply resources from which their contemporaries – and their elders too – can begin to function. In a very real sense, younger people are beginning to take ownership of the cultural canvas of expression. They feel that theirs is a world that can inform and develop cultural membership most effectively for the good of the current, and perhaps next, generation. And in so doing transient myths, adaptable models of self-presentation and flexible of-the-moment creations of collectives have become their most valuable and unique tools.

Most importantly, it has been the shifting of power – from monks to media to ordinary people– that we see embodied in some of the transitions to a consumer society.

Japan's youth in its high modernity – in its high consumerism – has moved to understanding its own agency in the setting into motion trends and approaches to managing the collective cultural identity. Where they will take this identity in the years to come is, of course, open to question, but at this time they are increasingly producing a common concept of a diverse culture with countless spaces for individuals to define themselves and represent their differentness. It is in the choice that consumerism provides to express ourselves that has, it seems, contributed much to this cultural pluralism based on the spontaneous creation of diverse solidarities.

Where once, “local diversity and historical transition in Japan (were) disregarded, result(ing) in depicting a country where a homogeneous and invariable culture continue to exist,” (Macdonald, 1995: 311) now we see Japan's youth tackling these cultural identities head-on. In their celebration of the local, and in the making of diverse worlds into collective plural cultural constructs, young people are reclaiming what Macdonald calls ‘the right to express our human sociality’.

We cannot afford romantic images of culture as national continuity, as something which can be exported from overseas, as the privilege of the powerful, as something associated with nation which prevents us from producing and sharing culture across as well as within national boundaries. These ideas prevent us from expressing and celebrating the richness of our diversity, our humanness, our creativity.

(1995: 313)

We can see young people as being well aware of Macdonald's observation; indeed, brought to produce their particular cultural constructs and characters as resources to engender the spaces for expression which Macdonald celebrates. But Macdonald speaks not just of sharing cultural diversity within national boundaries, but also of the associated ability to share diversity across boundaries too. If young Japanese are engaged in a process of deconstructing the previous generations' homogeneous use of cultural resources, then in what ways is their new internal pluralism displacing the presentation of Japanese national identity with and against non-Japanese selves and collectives? This is what we now move on to consider in the second section of *collective identities*.



The Ella tape had almost run its course, and I was feeling more relaxed. We had been talking about Kyushu people visiting other parts of Japan and how they were perceived. Kora had talked about the presentation and availability of *tonkotsu* noodles – a Kyushu variety – in Tokyo, and Megumi had reflected on the many famous musicians and actors who have come from her hometown of Kurume. Aki had remained quite silent throughout, although he had progressed through a fair amount of shouchu, and now began to nod his head repeatedly as he relaxed further and further into the comfort of his deck chair. As no one attempted to prevent this slow ebbing away of his presence, in time his head fell, his chin coming to rest on his chest.

Ella had now left the room and Moto rose to change the tape. Time had ticked on, the clock behind the bar read 1.25am. I stood and made my way over to the bar, leaving Kora and the girls talking quietly in the lounge area of the open-plan cabin.

“Ah, that’s a relief!” said Moto quietly. “Couldn’t handle much more of that Oyaji.”

I nodded and smiled.

Breaking a brief moment of silence Kora suddenly piped up:

“Right, bath time!”

In making this log-cabin retreat, Kora had been concerned that he should have the ultimate of Japanese luxuries: an *ofuro* (bath) that was as close to the natural hot-spring experience as possible. Unfortunately, the mountainside upon which his cabin was perched did not have access to the volcanically heated water under its surface, so in true Kora style, handfuls of power from a container marked ‘Natural Hot Spring!’ were poured into a bath full of heated rainwater and we were encouraged to close our eyes and imagine we were in the real thing! The experience was, in my opinion, better than the real thing – where else could one add an imaginative dimension to the normally rather mundane ritual of bathing? (Answers on a postcard, please!).

The girls, as was the usual order, went downstairs first to bathe in the wooden tub. Kora would often joke to them that doing so allowed the water to be infused with essential estrogens that would help keep him healthy when he bathed in the same

water. Such a statement often brought a good-humoured reproach: ‘Yeah right – you’re just a dirty old man!’ or such like, as was the case this night. I heard the girls laughing as they descended the steep stairs, and the phrase ‘dirty old man’ was repeated twice as their voices and laughter faded below the floor.

Kora came to join Moto and me at the bar, perching on a bar stool as Moto slid a tape into the machine and set three tumblers on the counter. Moto had seemed somewhat preoccupied. Where often he would help set the pace and tone of an evening, tonight he seemed thoughtful, slightly detached. His comment about Aki had seemed slightly out of character; it was unusual for him to speak badly of anyone.

“How’s that girl of yours, Moto?” asked Kora, perhaps also sensing a lack of involvement.

“Hasn’t been too easy lately, man,” answered Moto in a tone that suggested that Kora had been right on the button. Suddenly, Moto looked quite shaken, and reached for a bottle of expensive *Kurosaki* whisky⁴³, distributing a fair amount into each tumbler.

“She desperately wants to get married but my parents won’t agree, and I’m caught right in the middle of the whole thing – terrible.” He took a slug from his glass and lit a cigarette.

“Why’s that?” I asked.

⁴³ Kurosaki whiskey is sold at between 10-12,000 yen a bottle (approx. 100-120 US dollars or 60-70 GBP)

“Well, basically, because she’s a second generation Korean. My parents don’t approve of such things. Her family is ‘incompatible’.”

I took a large slug of my own whisky. Moto continued,

“It’s actually really fucking stupid. I didn’t even know that she was of Korean descent until a few years ago. It’s not like I ever went to her house or anything. And of course she was born here, so she doesn’t seem different in any way at all. And then one day she just came out with it all kind of matter-of-fact. Took me by surprise, of course, but didn’t change my image of her at all. But how weird, like I’ve been with her since I was 16, and this was almost ten years on! And I never even knew! She’d learned to hide it so well.

Anyway, now everything’s all fucked up and she is threatening suicide unless I go ahead and marry her against my parents’ wishes.”

Kora and I sat, taking in this information for a few seconds. We were both rather stunned to hear this new information from a close friend. The background music, which had earlier served to accompany me through my playing the uncomfortable role of foreigner, now took to guide a new subject. The Okinawan tones of Kino Shintomi’s famous tune, *The Flower*, flowed between us in the silence.

So Cry,

And Laugh,

For someday,

Someday,

It will be your turn too,

To blossom

The words passed into string instruments and Chinese guitar. Kora delicately picked up the bottle of whisky, and nodded it at Moto's glass. Moto moved the glass underneath the neck of the bottle and Kora began to pour. The whiskey faltered out of the bottle, gradually filling Moto's tumbler until it began to spill over the sides, wetting his clinched fingers and streaming onto the counter.

NATION

“Hey!” cried Moto, laughing, as he flicked and licked the whiskey from his hand. Kora returned the bottle to an upright position and set it on the counter, grabbed a nearby bar towel and handed it to Moto. The gesture had acknowledged the difficulty of Moto’s position, and at the same time given him the sympathy of our small group.

“Ah man, that was funny!” Moto said through the bar towel with which he was wiping his wet eyes. We all laughed, and when we had finished, divided Moto’s full tumbler between the three of us and held our glasses aloft.

“Cheers! Um, to love and life... and... to, the Koreans and Japanese, and all those in between!” pronounced Kora.

“The Koreans and Japanese and all those in between!” we echoed.

The tumbler glasses made a satisfying clink, and we all took our whiskey down in one. The resulting exhalations must have caused more than just an auditory stir in the air, for Aki’s head suddenly rose from his chest. He sneezed loudly, following up with a series of snorts, and then his head dropped slowly back down to its supported slumber.



Our parents’ ideas of what our nations mean, what they represent, who they include and exclude make large claims on us; on the decisions we make and on the way we perceive the outside world of other peoples and places. Not least, their ideas of the type of people we should/could marry clearly illustrate a set of expectations as to how

to continue to propel an upward pattern of mobility that they perceive themselves as having set into motion. In Moto's case, marrying a Korean would not be 'good for the family'. The types of people that are included/excluded from 'acceptable' categories tell us much about the conceptions of national identity over time and generations. After all, wrapped up in our parents' conceptions are *their* parents' models of understanding – and their attempts to consolidate them – so that we exist on the forefront of an ongoing attempt to manoeuvre and manipulate a "freer" and "more privileged" position for ourselves in the world, seeking mobility whether that means rejecting or embracing our elders' ways of life or worldviews (see Bertaux & Thompson, 1993)⁴⁴.

As we have seen in the last section, traditional narratives and models of Japanese cultural identity, have, on the whole, attempted to oust other Asians from a categorical understanding of Japaneseness. This Japan has thought itself superior to Koreans, Chinese and all darker skinned Asian populations. As these cultural conceptions have sought to gain further definition and utility, they have helped—and been helped—by a corresponding need to seek a sense of nationhood. Cultural collective understandings have become the "props" through which various nationalist discourses have played out their stories and scripts (see Vlastos, 1998, and Gluck, 1985). But, as we observed in Part Two, the following of that story—the *need* to follow it—has represented imaginative opportunities for one generation, and spelt out a restricted existence for another. People's actual *familial worlds*—their intimate lives—are affected and ordered by the claims that their *collective identities* make upon them. And it was this point that stood out in Moto's father's case as Moto helped me to

⁴⁴ See also the discussion in Part One for further consideration on the role of the family in generating lifecourses and worldviews.

understand in a conversation we had some weeks later in the more sober setting of my Amatetsu house over cups of coffee:

“My parents are of that generation that puts work before their individual or even family lives. We lived in one of those Japan Railway communities – quite a vibrant place until the railways were privatised and loads of people lost their jobs. Because of the nature of the community—it was quite literally part of a wider national infrastructure—there was maybe a sense that people were more involved with the aims of the state than was the case among people who were living in agricultural communities. This may have had something to do with the strength of the views that my parents have about Koreans and other Asians.

“Unlike our parents and grandparents, who often had first or second-hand experience of Japan’s expansionism, our generation wasn’t really taught about the colonisation of neighbouring countries, and we certainly don’t feel *invested* in that colonisation the way my parents seem to. We grew up with different attitudes towards them (other Asians). They don’t so much exist as part of what was once a Japanese empire – as they seem to for older generations, but more as independent places with their own particular cultures and so on. So while people like my parents view Korea as a kind of second-class Japan, my generation see it as a world country that is behind Japan industrially. There is generally no, like, stereotype attached to its people as there has been in the past.”

The link between Moto’s parents’ understanding of their nation’s place in the world, and their perceived place within their nation is interesting to note. Having contributed

over his long life to Japan's Railway Company, Moto sees his father aligning himself with the wider efforts of his nation to cast its exclusive and superior cultural identity into a new national framework. Not only was he of the right generation to see these resources as useful to the worldview of the time, but he also worked for one of the state's primary transport networks. In identifying, day-to-day, with what he does for a living, he is also seen to identify with the aims of the State, and the national membership that such an organisation imparts.

Here we reaffirm that to pursue affiliation to the state—as we observed in Part Two—was, to many people of this generation, to pursue mobility—to see an expanded set of social opportunities (citizenships, memberships) as obtainable through aligning oneself with the narratives of nationhood. And culture—or cultural heritage, traditions and narratives—was used as a kind of entry-point through which people could become members of the Japanese nation: “I am a member of a uniquely Japanese culture”. In understanding the principles and roots of national identity, it is no doubt easiest to look to the cultural identity that underpins it: the narratives, histories and selves lying at its foundation. So Moto's father is really expressing his cultural identity – involving a narrative of superiority towards other Asians -- on a national canvas (as we have seen). But it is a far more challenging and interesting task to understand that conceptions of national identity, based upon cultural selves and histories, are themselves tied to more personal conceptions of who we are, the insecurities we have, the roles we have taken, and the ways we approach and belong to more local and intimate social worlds (see Zeldin, 1994).

We have seen in each section of this thesis how the various levels on which we craft our identities have been through significant shifts of meaning. And, importantly, we have observed how these transitions have had to do with strategies to pursue social freedoms and define difference generationally. In all the observations thus far, we have seen a playing out of the familial and collective worlds of Japanese people, coming to re-enforce the central notion of where one finds opportunities and a sense of mobility.

Somewhat surprisingly, in an examination of how the nation state helps to add a further layer of collective identity to our social repertoire and to this hermeneutic production of identity, the ability to incorporate our understandings of ourselves into a wide national construct which perceives millions of people belonging to the same social group, has been seen as a relatively recent one (Gellner, 1992). National identity is a kind of new imaginative technology that has followed the growth and complexity of our societies through modernity; it has reflected changes in the nature of our ability to be conscious of ourselves as a collective.

In a small society, since everybody is roughly placed in the same conditions of existence, the collective environment is essentially concrete. It is made up of human beings of every kind who people the social horizon. The states of consciousness that represent it are therefore of the same character... the whole tribe, provided it is not too extensive, enjoys or suffers equally the advantages and inconveniences of (the same) sun and rain, heat and cold, or of a particular river or spring, etc... Consequently the common consciousness has a definite character. But this consciousness alters in

nature as societies grow more immense. Because they are spread over a much vaster area, the common consciousness is itself forced to rise above all local diversities, to dominate more the space available, and consequentially to become more abstract.

(Durkheim 1984: 230)

Durkheim's ideas of collective consciousness help us to understand the development of national identity. For when we think of our position as members of nations, we seem to be expressing uniquely abstract concepts of community. Like our concepts of culture, our nations are imaginative extensions of us as visible face-to-face collectives experiencing one familiar world in one common time frame. But precisely because they involve a further level of abstraction -- of time—members of a nation exist in one of many possible time frames; and of space- living in a compartmentalised geographic 'slice' too big to be seen – nations require new conceptual tools. There is significant evidence to suggest that our ability to construct an 'imagined community' consisting of 'unknown' but nevertheless somehow 'like' others in the world reflects a shift in how we have perceived time and space and our place within these abstract frameworks.

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his 240,000,000-odd fellow-Americans. He has no idea of

what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity.

(Anderson, 1991: 26)

In his now widely read *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson sees these shifts of time and space to be represented and accompanied by the development of the printing press, the newspaper, and concepts that were born with the modern novel and an influx of modernity and industrialisation. It is particularly this idea of the simultaneity of action – the imaginative ability to perceive things happening *at the same time* – that Anderson sees as characterising the imaginative ability to perceive the nation into being. More precisely, it is seeing representations of this simultaneous collective existence in the real and the everyday detail of life that most stimulates us to ascribe ourselves to a nation of like others. Reading the newspaper is one such example:

It is performed in silent privacy, in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has not the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar. What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned? At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbours,

is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life.

(Ibid., 1991: 35-36)

Anderson's and Durkheim's argument allow us to see behind the taken-for-granted concepts that we hold of our place in a wider world. Indeed, perhaps in all of our interaction and engagement in social life there is no area more intuitive, more hidden under the surface of our physical existence than our abstract ordering of our sense of 'place'. What is exciting about both of these theories is that together they suggest that we can trace the conceptual patterns of thought that pervade and create our collective concepts through time and history. From Durkheim's small scale societies' 'horizons' of consciousness, to understanding how Anderson's newspaper readers abstractly create the national collective worlds around them, we can suggest a progression of modes of understanding alongside the increasing complexity and modernity of our social groups. We can add to our understanding of the children of modernity and their respective generational identities and divides.

Behind our relatively recent imaginative ability to perceive a world of nations, then, lie significant shifts in the way we perceive time and simultaneous action as occurring in a geographical time-and-space frame. And logically, alongside this development we have had to oust certain ways of thinking that have ordered time and space in a different way, particularly when thinking about script language offering access to truth, and of monarchs as deities – see Anderson, 1991: 36. To place ourselves in a world of nations is certainly to find location on contemporary common ground. But just as people have been through significant shifts of thought in order to facilitate the

imagined community of the nation, so I will argue that significant recent changes in the way that we perceive our *collective identities* and order our *familial worlds* has begun to displace the imagined community of the nation state with yet another transition of thought, membership and solidarity.

In this chapter I shall attempt to build on the argument thus far: that modernity-driven familial and collective change in Japan has continued to pluralise the worlds of younger people on all levels. Thus a single homogeneous national identity is becoming less and less emotionally relevant in the lives of Japanese people. I will argue that while many – perhaps even the majority of us -- live in a world made by the imagined communities of nation states, there is a new force – a new generation⁴⁵ – of people for whom that collective is becoming less powerful. I will try and characterise this ‘alternative’ imaginative community and examine its nature: does it embody a time frame that sees the simultaneous action of people *across* national borders as well as within them? And if so, is it the beginnings of a real and concrete sense of global citizenship? We need to look back at the beginnings of nation-building in Japan in order to be able to answer these questions.

Hiro's Occupation

Hiro is a kind and gentle man in his early 40's who can come across as rather over-zealous in the company of others. His usual bravado and confidence, (he was

⁴⁵ There are, of course, many indigenous peoples who do not feel aligned to the nation states that have often been built up around them.

somewhat of a celebrity back in the 70's and 80's in the world of motorcycle racing) did not, however, appear to be in force on this occasion.

Hiro sat in front of me on the small single bed, his eyes brimming with the tears of recently expressed emotion. He had met a girl whom he liked very much. She was the first foreign girl who had captured his heart. Not only that but she was blond and had blue eyes; oh yes, blue eyes.

“My friends are going to be so jealous!” he said naively and with earnest pride. We had just spent an hour or so involved in an intense sharing of hearts and minds. Hiro had reached a point in this new-found relationship where communication was of vital importance, and I had been brought in to play the rather uncomfortable role of translator – cultural and linguistic – to facilitate the sharing of feelings on love, marriage, life and companionship.

The experience had left us both stirred. The small room in which we now conducted our conversation took on a more vivid intensity than its rather simple furnishings and décor warranted. And it was perhaps with a sense of the heightened nature of this atmosphere, and of hearing his deepest emotions translated, that Hiro began to need to explain to me the preconditions of his view of foreigners, of blue-eyed women, and, by extension, his very status as a Japanese man in his early forties.

“When I was about ten years old, many of the children of the American soldiers at the nearby base were sent to our school. For some odd reason these children were almost

all girls, and almost all had blond hair and blue eyes. At least that's how I remember them.

“My friends and I were nervous of these girls – they were beautiful, of course, -- and we wanted, looking back now, so much to talk to them, to make them our friends. But we were afraid of their fathers, of what they might do to us if they found out we had been speaking to their daughters – they were soldiers, after all. The Americans seemed so big and so frightening. And no matter how lovely these other children seemed to us, they were still a sort of extension of these people whom we had learnt to fear.

“We used to watch them come and go from school from behind a wall, I remember. Seems crazy now; what must we have looked like? Little boys afraid of these girls and sneaking glimpses of them whenever we could. Being boys, our fear of the Americans turned into a kind of naughtiness – I remember on other occasions shouting things like ‘Yankee go home!’ as I sped past a soldier on my push bike and getting the most amazing buzz from doing so!” Hiro laughed with the image of his childhood defiance.

“The presence of the girls at our school – and the inability to talk to them through this fear of ours – sort of reaffirmed the sense of oppression that we picked up from our families and communities. Of course the Americans had brought peace a decade or more before, and for that reason we didn't feel persecuted in any way, nor under threat. But we were still under them somehow, somehow sort of dominated by their presence. We felt oppressed in some ways -- occupied. And the girls, in their beauty

and carefreeness sort of embodied this – we were not of the same world, we were trapped and they were free, we were the occupied and they were the occupiers.

“So I suppose we thought that we were not good enough for them, and that no matter how much we wanted to reach out and make friends with them, no matter how much we thought that they were just children too, there was some heavier weight upon us that made us act the way we did. Fear, inferiority, pride, a mixture of all of these?”

Hiro coughed slightly and smiled.

“So why I wonder do I continue to seek out the blond women with blue eyes?” he asked, pre-empting my question. “Is it because I have sort of overcome that fear, that inferiority, and feel the need to make a connection to what I know I should have reached out to before? That is certainly the rose-tinted interpretation. Or is it, to give the possible motive the full range, that we all—me and my friends—kind of made a unspoken vow at ten years of age that one day we would seek a re-balancing – that we would become the occupiers and these people the occupied? It’s an awful thought, but perhaps the truth lies somewhere in-between?”

Ten years old is not an unusually young age to have an acute sense of the national and cultural signifiers of the world around us. I remember living in the East end of London when my younger brother was only six. His best friend was black, and one day, as children do, he decided that for that day he would rather not play with him. Instead of just saying that he didn’t want to play with him and risk hurting his feelings, he decided to blame an outside agent: “My Mum says I’m not allowed to play with

black children.” Needless to say that this caused a bit of an uproar and both mothers involved were not pleased at all. My brother was harshly rebuked and genuinely upset and regretful about the repercussions of his words. But for that day at least, my brother had managed to tap into a fault line of racial conflict that community life in London’s East end embodied in the early 80’s, and, importantly for him at the time, got out of playing with his friend for that day.

But my brother’s actions were characteristic of a sort of abuse of power. He was a white child in a society with a white majority. Conflict occurred because of the potential consequences his actions had on the development of his friend’s sense of his identity, as a black child in a predominantly white world.

In Hiro’s dialogue, we see a very different situation. He was part of the majority world, but that majority world was under the occupation of a minority. The potential damage to Hiro and his friends was one of setting inferiority into the clay of their developing images of themselves as Japanese. And the degree to which, at least if even to a small degree, Hiro sees a need to shift the power balance years later by taking possession of a blond-haired blue-eyed women, illustrates the long-range power of that instilled sense of inferiority, and the importance of our collective identities in shaping our life courses.

Japan’s Struggle for (inter)Nation(alisation)

Japan, it has often been said, suffers from a deep underlying inferiority complex. We looked at some of the effects of negotiating its identity vis-à-vis ‘the West’ in the last

chapter. Particularly important to remember here is the way in which social Darwinist/Spencerist thought – the idea of a kind of ‘ranked power’ model of Japan’s place in an unfolding of civilisations – has acted to bolster and construct the first real collective senses of nationhood in Japan (see Yoshino, 1992 and Watanabe, 1990). Sakamoto (1996) has argued that the first phase of Meiji nation building was, then, ironically the product of mixing western notions of world order with essentialist Japanese ones – resulting in a kind of hybrid national discourse⁴⁶. We can liken this to Japan taking on a foreign ‘technology’ of identity and then attempting to improve and alter it to win what was perceived as a kind of civilisation contest. With reference to the theories of a man he sees to be Early Meiji’s most influential proponent of national discourse, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Sakamoto writes:

With a social Darwinian faith in evolutionary history, (Fukuzawa) argues that Japan’s civilisation is a necessity of history that will take place sooner or later. Since the temporal distance between the West and Japan is ‘only one step’, Japan should gain on the West imminently if it makes an effort to speed up the process.

(1996: 119)

Despite such attempts to place Japan in a fatalistic narrative which would see it overcome and overpower the ‘higher’ nations of the time, the rhetoric of social Darwinism was of course a dangerous one to take on. The problem is that to employ it means seeing that Japan ‘starts off’ so to speak, from an inferior position. Thus if the project fails – if there is no evidence for Japan’s arising from the primordial semi-

⁴⁶ Vlastos (1998) makes a convincing argument for the fact that the idea of nation in Japan and other industrialised countries “stands as the mega invented tradition of the modern era” (pp.8).

civilised state into a dominant position of power – then the whole national discourse is revealed as a kind of elaborate set-up to ‘rescue’ Japan from the position of Europe’s inferior other. In contemporary terms, the importation of these national ‘technologies’ of thought and identity relied on boarding a band wagon that perpetuated a continual need to ‘advance’ and to ‘progress’ above and beyond other ‘inferior’ peoples.

What Fukuzawa’s discourse fails to do is to reveal and invalidate the hierarchical taxonomy of civilisation/non-civilisation as the universal and the particular... In this formulation, no matter how many diverse elements ‘civilisation’ may include, and how ‘hybrid’ civilisation may become, the existence (and construction) of a particular and inferior outside is necessary.

(1996:125)

There is no doubt that again– as we saw in the last section – Japan increasingly turned to other Asian countries in its attempts to further this core construction technique of ranked power vis-à-vis others deemed ‘inferior’. But as Sakamoto suggests, doing so perpetuates the need to find place in the world in terms of “ranked power”: if other Asians are inferior to Japan, then Japan must be inferior to other more powerful nations? This sense of an unresolved national discourse continues, argues Nakano, into the present day because the whole scheme, was of course, eventually undermined by world events:

The basic psychological attitude of Japanese people is a kind of inferiority complex which results in their still being reluctant to take a vigorous part in world affairs, simply because they do not belong to the

main ethnic groups who built the modern system of contemporary world order. They once engaged in such an enterprise and failed (1868—1945).

(1995: 69)

If Japanese expansionism and then defeat sent the message that a Japanese nation imagined through the locus of social Darwinism was unsustainable, then postwar national discourses illustrated the degree to which many Japanese people felt a need to explore a variety of alternative narratives in their urge to picture themselves as people in the world. If the legacy of social Darwinism was to continue to invoke a feeling of inferiority, surely the national discourse could be developed and modified again to allow for further more positive interpretations?

Let us take a short interlude in the analysis of Japanese national narratives to make the point that it is not only in defeat that nations feel a need to re-evaluate their core sense of cultural relativity. Success, too, brings its challenges. As nation states respond to the rebalancing of power relations and cultural exchanges that a World War brings about, old ideas of nationalism propagated during wartime become outdated. Periods of postwar re-evaluation and recovery of the national identity are, in both victory and defeat, characterised by a diversification of ways to think about the nation's place in the world (Balakrishnan, 1996). Also, in this we reaffirm that the quest for national representation occurs alongside the ideas people have at particular times to improve their sense of mobility. To take on social Darwinist ideas in early Meiji was to place oneself in a expanded world of powerful and impressive nations and civilisations, to align with their successes and to be part of a global story. To disassociate from this was to find a way of presenting national membership that didn't necessarily require

such a competitive environment in order to find legitimisation and a sense of ratified place.

In response to these newer needs to rebase national narratives, we can see in this postwar period that a search began to locate the Japanese nation in a variety of discourses that would help to reanimate and re-legitimise the national imagination. Again, as we noted in the last chapter, *nihonjinron*, or theories of Japaneseness were one of the manifestations of these efforts to find new forms of expression. With Clammer, (2000) I see the main bulk of these theories as being best explained in terms of an ‘indigenous discourse’⁴⁷ – rather than ultranationalist absurdities (Dale, 1995) – which attempt to provide alternative cultural criticism and analysis on “Japan’s emergence as a distinctive civilizational form” (Clammer, 2000: 205).

More recently, (80s-90s) the phenomena of internationalisation or *kokusaika* has been seen as a mode through which Japan’s increased successes economically and a corresponding sense of a newfound expression of national distinctiveness can be framed. If we take McCormack’s view of *kokusaika*, we see it as a force of new transnational economic exchange and effect that acts to further define Japan as unique, rather than open it to the outside world. It manages this by a kind of economic comparison with other countries:

...*kokusaika* has not been accompanied by any significant social opening and diversity; instead the established pattern of treatment of minorities – assimilation, discrimination – is reproduced. The very ‘success’ that

⁴⁷ See also Befu (2001).

creates this *kokusaika* continues to stimulate a Japanese desire to assert its identity more forcefully, which in turn, sharpens tensions internationally and domestically, in an intensifying vicious circle.

(1996: 275)

Internationalisation, or *kokusaika* has been used, then, as a way to return to models of cultural identity that have stressed uniqueness and homogeneity, rather than a departure from these narratives. It has provided a national discourse to contain these renewed statements of exclusivity and ethnocentrism and embodied the “aspiration to discover and proclaim a distinctive Japanese identity” (1996: 277).

In a parallel effort to find renewed expressions of cultural identity in a national discourse, Robertson, (1997), argues that “internationalisation and native place-making exist coterminously as refractive processes and products, and that together they index the ambiguity of Japanese national identity and its tense relationship with cultural identity” (or identities) (1997: 98). In Japan, then, just as people have been attempting to find “compelling Japanese tropes for cultural, social and economic self sufficiency” (pp.102), so they have reached back into older ideas of a core sense of Japanese culture in order to propel themselves into identification with new national discourses (see again Gluck, 1985 and Vlastos, 1998).

If internationalisation has worked to provide the external projection of a unique Japan, then native place making, or *furusato*, has allowed a reaffirmation of the authenticity of ethnocentric models (Robertson, 1997 :105). We looked, in Part Two’s Family section, at how the nation had often attempted to find itself as an extension of the

familial (family-unit) in pre-war Japan. Both Robertson (1997) and Yoshino (1992) emphasise a newfound salience of this imaginative familial connection, placing particular stress upon the fact that the agricultural village community has been used as a foundation for building a sense of modern nationhood.

The focus on peasant culture as the tradition of Japan suggests a number of important things... (it) assumes an ideological character when social patterns in the modern company, which tends to be regarded as a quasi-village, are associated with Japan's post-war economic success and when the communal features of the company, which are reminiscent of the pre-industrial village community, are celebrated as a cause of Japan's industrial strength.

(Yoshino, 1992: 102-103)

Central to modern Japan's national narrative lies a sense of communal village-like existence. We have also observed this in the last section too. However, this agricultural way of life now comes to inform a world-class economic power's national concept. Indeed it is precisely as a result of the unique social structures preserved and nurtured in the 'old' villages of Japan that the modern day economic success arises, or so the narrative goes. Reaching back into Japan's traditional ways of life has, then, infused the Japanese national narrative with the continuity of historical linkage and a sense of its strength and power on the world economic stage. In many ways it has been the narrative and discourse to 'save' a sense of Japaneseness, to render it legitimate from the inside -- and with the help of its parallel *kokusaika* -- from the outside too.

Japan's quest for a stable national discourse has been a turbulent one. It has involved taking on Western derived ideas of civilisation, then a rejection of such models, a return to older ideas of finding collective identity in essentialistic notions of Japaneseness, an effort that was then 'fed-back' to the outside world once Japan was recognised as a economic power. In order to substantiate these approaches, parallel efforts to replant a sense of nativism in the population through various *furusato* programs have been undertaken. These trends represent some general movements of national identity which act upon and influence the stories and identities to which young people are now exposed from their older generations (see Stronach, 1995).

Before we progress into contrasting young people's Japan with these exclusive and generally ethnocentric national narratives, I wish to add to the breath of this representation by employing Handa to show us how older Japanese are by no means all nationalists and perhaps to give an example which can provide some sense of balance against research and literature which has tended to emphasise the homogenous nature of Japan's national identity at the expense of some of its diversity.

Handa's Japan

"I don't know if one is better than the other", remarked Handa thoughtfully, sitting beside me in my Toyota as we raced along route 51 towards the Harazuru hot-spa. We were talking about America's occupation of Japan, whether it had been a good thing for the Americans to do.

“After the Americans came there was peace. This is a key point of course, because Japan was a warring nation up to this point, and the people benefited greatly from peacetime. But there was a sense of the collective nation which made life before occupation particularly special for many people – they felt they had a stake in something bigger than themselves, than their communities, and this brought them together in many ways.

“Of course, since the Occupation, that idea of the collective nation has slowly given way to an individualism which seems to have left some of Japan’s traditions behind in the transition. I mean, today people have so much individuality that they rarely seem to consider others at all.”

Handa is 53 years old. He has witnessed, through his parents’ stories and his community experience, the transition of his country from a place of relative poverty – of mind and of pocket – to a modern industrial economy.

“There was a time when Japanese people would have died for their emperor – for some sort of collective good. Now people are individuals, they think and act for themselves.”

He paused thoughtfully and then said again, “I don’t know which is better. It’s impossible to say. Perhaps it’s something we shouldn’t ask. But with this new rise of suicide terrorism we see again how ‘the collective’ can be damaging to say the least. Yet, on the other hand, to think and feel the solidarity which that belief gives – to live

in that rich world – is to somehow be complete. After all, what’s the alternative? To know bugger all about one’s history, to go through a life worrying about Nike trainers and Armani suits with not a care for country?”

Handa was originally from a landowning family but spends his time with a wide variety of traditionally working class friends and the odd Shinto priest. In his naturally altruistic fashion, he consistently attempts to represent the Ordinary Man in all his explanations and understandings of Japan to me, the foreigner and anthropologist. But despite these efforts at ethnographic portrayal, his experiences of Japan are spoken through a wide angled lens. His Japan moves through key stages: when people were poor, when people were occupied, when people were rich, and when people were and are in recession. He has identified with the whole spectrum and almost sees himself as having experienced it too.

His Japan is at once all this experience – and he sees himself as embodying and portraying it – and his national identity, the expression of this experience to the world. He knows what it is like to feel embedded within the national rhetoric of ideology -- to feel fully invested in the aims and visions of the collective – but also what it is to take on a ‘democratic’ ‘individual’ mind, self controlling and detached. In many ways, his ability to see the value and example of each makes his perspective remarkable in the context of a wider world that predominantly seeks to define itself as civilised (individualistic) vis-à-vis other ‘evil’ ‘tyrannical’ collective types (or merely ‘uncivilised’ societies moved by the collective).

Handa's world appears to be one rooted in common global discourse – one that has begun to connect to contemporary narratives of nation common to many industrialised countries. Gone are the notions of cultural nationalism based on exclusivity, and incorporated now are the ideas that people create particular identities under particular regimes and societal states. In this, Handa is far and away removed from the likes of Aki, of those people who feel the need to exclude in order to sense solidarity. But even in his enlightened position, Handa's world is structured around points of national identification.

For Handa's self – his cumulative experience and observation – packages itself as his national identity. Handa's idea of himself in the world, although wide-ranging and diverse, cannot take itself beyond its national context. Although he has a comparative understanding of people exposed to different stages of sociality and is able to apply such understanding, he is able to understand all this *because* he is Japanese. And thus his comments on world events are packaged along traditional lines--'We, the Japanese, would have approached (this or that event) in (this or that) way', or 'yes, but *we* would not have stood for (that event) in the way that America or Korea did'.

The point is that most of us are like Handa. In our respective ways we are the result of a world that sees itself as a story of nations. We *are* the evidence for Anderson's theory of imagined national communities because we generally see and perceive the world around us as made up of distinct national entities moving through time at various speeds and trajectories. It is simply obvious that the world works in this way.

But is it? For from now on we will see newer ways to envision place in the wider picture of transnational narratives and realities at work. This is a perspective which doesn't just go against the ideas of Japan as situated in ranked power model – the nationalist Japan -- but also expands beyond an idea of 'only' being able to be a Japanese in a world of nations. If Handa represents a contemporary understanding of a sense of nationhood, bound up with a common notion of time and of competing nations in a global narrative, then a new generation illustrates the degree to which even these comparatively open understandings are being put aside in favour of a rather different sense of one's affiliations.



It was now the boys who would take it in turns to go and bathe in the *ofuro*. The girls could be heard making their final preparations to return upstairs after their immersion. As Moto, Kora and I began to move from our positions at the bar, Moto said empathically,

“You know, it's funny, I sort of should give more of a shit about what my father thinks about marrying Hiroko, but I really have got to the point where I think ‘fuck it!’ Like, why should I run my life based on their fucked-up idea of the world?”

Kora nodded and said, “Yes, it's a tricky one that: gotta tread a balance, man.”

“A balance, hey...” pondered Moto, “the only balance my parents need is between the world that they understand and the one that’s reality. People, Kora my friend, are people after all.”

A New Japan in the World

Nowhere are new ideas about Japan in the world made in more obvious contrast against the ‘old’ than in the view that younger people have of Japan’s place in a wider Asia. Here there is a very clear re-evaluation of the “ranked-power” model that many older people hold. In my interviews with young people from *yon-gumi* and from the more urban settings of Kurume, Fukuoka and Tokyo, the overriding answer to questions of whether they considered themselves to be *Asian* above and beyond their sense of Japaneseness, was a resounding ‘yes’. This is not a national imagination that seeks exclusion on the world stage, but conversely, searches for a pan-Asian historical continuity.

“I am ‘Japanese’, of course,” said one 20 year female informant from Tokyo, “but I would find it limiting just to leave it there. I am also Asian and belong to a kind of wider Asian civilisation.”

“Oh, yes, I’m definitely an Asian—I mean like most Japanese come from Mongolia and Korea originally don’t they?” (25 year old male, Amatetsu)

“Yes, Asia is certainly where I put my ‘roots’, Japanese are a more recent people.”

(21 year old male, Amatetsu)

“I’m Asian first, and Japanese next.” (19 year old female, Kurume)

Although there were exceptions, these responses differed from those of older people in one important way. While older people generally acknowledged an Asian heritage, they were almost without exception “Japanese, then Asian”. The younger people saw things the other way around. In addition, the ideas that the younger people had of themselves in an Asian context were often contrasted against older generation’s ideas of themselves in the world.

“My Dad only ever thinks about Japan, and has never been abroad—I don’t think he’d like other Asian countries too much—he’s a bit prejudiced. But I love going to visit other Asian countries and meeting people there. Sometimes our cultures are so similar it’s scary!” (23 year old female, Tokyo)

“My parents have never travelled. It’s quite sad really. They miss out on a lot of the culture and richness that Asia has to offer. And we are, after all, part of the same history—and share the same races.” (26 year old male, Kurume)

Clearly, for a range of urban and rural young people, the national narratives of exclusivity—the inferiority complex and the “ranked-power” model used to divide up a world of nations in their parents’ and grandparents’ time—have become outdated and irrelevant. These newer and more adapt national narratives are fed very directly

by the understandings of the cultural diversity in which young people see themselves as moving (see last section, Culture). Thus to see Asian peoples as inclusive allows young people to perform internal expressions of diversity and vice versa. I will develop this observation as we continue.

Such an understanding of previously “lower-ranked” countries now being in the same orbit as the Japanese, and the framing of some Japanese national narratives in relation to this inclusive model, is not limited to Asia. This was hammered home by a young informant of mine, Noriko, who had decided she’d try to directly replace her father’s racial prejudice with her own national understanding:

“Well, my Dad’s a sweetie but sometimes he needs a bit of educating. Like it came up the other day that my sister liked some guy off the TV from Morocco. My Dad just said, off-hand, that she’d better not be thinking of marrying a foreigner. We weren’t shocked but we challenged my Dad: what’s wrong with marrying a foreigner? And after a while we basically got down to the fact that it was OK in his terms to marry a white person, but that he discriminated against darker-skinned people. Well, that was it—we had no choice but to set to work on him: “What, so you’re going to decide the quality of a person from his skin colour?” and stuff like that. Eventually what could he do? He had to take our point of view—his was just indefensible—and now he thinks we’re really clever!”

These newer notions of expanding traditional borders of ‘nation’ to encompass a wider cultural and geographic influence were not only brought to the fore in answers to questions on Asian solidarity and membership, or – as Moto has pointed out – in

seeing other Asians as on an equal footing with the Japanese, or as we have seen above, by attempting successfully to bring home some of the more contemporary understandings of race and nation to their elders. These newer understandings of a Japan connected to a previously ousted set of nations were discernible in the very quality of interactions that the various generations had with other Asians (and different others) both in Japan and beyond. And nowhere did the generational nature of these divides become more apparent than on a trip I took to Korea with a Japanese family.

Korea with the Hiranans

I had known Tetsuo, (the father, 65), Hideko, (the mother, 62), and Jun, (the son, 26), for some time and was quite familiar with how their respective interpretations of Japan governed their interaction. I had, after all, (as a foreigner) been subject to occasional stereotypes and noticed how my presence had brought certain aspects of their national identities to the fore.

In our five-day trip to Korea it was not I, however, who instigated a playing out of respective ideas of Japanese national identity, but the Koreans to whom we came into contact. During our stay it became increasingly obvious that the Jun's parents found interaction with other Koreans very difficult indeed. They were unable to respond naturally to any encounters with Koreans, commonly not acknowledging greetings or acting as if whoever had just spoken was unimportant or somehow not of this world. By extension, they were unable to initiate any kind of interaction and relied wholly

upon Jun to speak to these other Asians (despite the fact that many of the Koreans we encountered spoke excellent Japanese).

By contrast, Jun was constantly seeking out new companions and engaging in conversation with a variety of young Koreans. Together we spoke in depth to six or seven Koreans during the time we were in Korea. After each interaction, Jun stressed how important it was to begin to live in the 'same world' as other peoples abroad and how his parents "were just too old and too closed minded to be able to see the commonalties between different people". Indeed, as the behavioural differences between the generations became ever more stark during our time there, Jun finally said to me, "Isn't it just terrible that my parents seen so closed minded? I mean they are living in a completely different world – I just can't put up with it any longer!"

Despite the glaring differences between the abilities of Jun and his father to incorporate the other Asian into a like world, Jun's father seemed on one level to understand that these differences existed and were somehow important. On one occasion when we were together over a meal and Jun was clearly dismissing of his father's points of view following another day of uncomfortable tension, Tetsuo said to his son:

"I know that you young people live in a different world and I see that you think that I am a stupid *oyaji*."

“It’s not so much that, Dad, but why do you have to find it so difficult to relate to people here? Like that guy we were talking to yesterday – Kim – he had a lot of interesting things to say. You miss out by being so... isolated.”

“You may be right,” said Tetsuo, “but I’m old and I can’t help it. You get on with living in the now and I’ll be the old miserable fart who makes your life a misery.”

Although he continued to be unable to interact naturally with Koreans, this brief exchange illustrated Tetsuo’s constant flirting with the new and empowering idea that he can learn from his son and take on fresh ideas about himself in the world. On one fundamental level the idea excites and frees him from the constraints of the world that he has built – and has been built by others – around him. However, there is an opposing force that I can term only *tradition*, which makes a massive claim upon him. When life becomes too overwhelming – and his son’s insights and ideas about the world themselves can easily overwhelm him – he reverts to a mode of thought and behaviour that embodies all of the formalised patterns of culture – their social systems and limitations – of his parents’ generation. In this we perhaps reaffirm that our national identities are powerful reminders (and containers) for a variety of identities that we have taken on. Relinquishing our place in a “social economy”⁴⁸ is a hard thing to do, and for Jun’s father there seemed to be too much important generational information contained in his Japaneseness to do so. To take on an entirely re-configured Japanese identity like his son’s would represent a threat to all he had internalised as ‘true’ from his parents and their world.

⁴⁸ We have survived socially by projecting a particular image of ourselves as a member of a group. In this we have found place in the market of ideas and identities, and can feel too invested in our niche to be able to leave it, lest we run out of social capital.

In stark contrast, Jun's interaction with native Koreans represented a highly significant and profound departure from his parents' generation's approach. In his desire to build bridges and to establish a sense of transnational solidarity, Jun was the antithesis of his father's understanding of place and identity. As Jun's national identity acted as facilitator to inclusive cross-border social interaction, his parents' sense of nation excluded this (inferior and lower) other people, elevating themselves beyond the category of 'Asian' and maintaining their 'Japaneseness'. The ways in which Jun understood himself as a part and parcel of a 'diverse world connected' illustrated that he was approaching and placing himself within an entirely different national rhetoric.

Other young people

For the vast majority of young people I interviewed, observed and/or became friends with in my hamlet of *yon-gumi* and the wider town of Amatetsu and beyond, it was this sense of needing to make connections with others, regardless of national status, that pervaded their interactions. And once connections were made, interaction was conducted in very much the same way as if they had been connections between Japanese people. They (foreigners) became part of the stylistic and diverse framework of the young people's more locally experienced worlds. Again, there was a marked contrast between these young people's interactions with foreigners and their elders' approach to interaction with "outsiders".

"My Dad just can't shift from seeing foreigners as a sort of threat. It's really immature!" (23 year old male, Amatestu)

“Young people have such a confidence in meeting people from the outside world these days. It always amazes me!” (Hanada, 48, yon-gumi)

“Why see foreigners as different anyway? I don’t understand some old people. You’d think they were living on a different planet!” (26 year old male, Tokyo)

“When I see my son off working abroad, or my daughter heading off to Korea or China for a holiday, I just think what a borderless world they live in. I envy them in a way.” (Ikeda, 74, Amatetsu)

“Yeah, I went to England once with a much older friend of mine. It was seriously embarrassing. Like we were going to the clubs and pubs and stuff—I was looking for women—and he would come up to me and say things like: “Oh these foreigners are so beautiful and *white*,” or “Haven’t they got small faces!” He was like a child, unable to step out of the role of the old “Japanese”.” (29 year old male, Tokyo)

“Foreigners are lovely, I love them all!” (63 year old female, Amatetsu)

“People are people wherever you go. You get good ones and bad ones and those in-between.” (23 year old female, Kurume)

Overridingly, compared with their older generations, younger Japanese seem able to envisage the foreigner in a psychological matrix of diverse relations, confident that at some significant point, a connection between themselves and this other would be

found. It is as if they have honed the skill of establishing a connection with anyone they meet. This seemingly well practised “skill” or “technique,” I argue, is of course the mainstay of the younger Japanese sets’ dealings *with each other*.

This need to seek out linkage and connectivity with other non-Japanese—and to incorporate the resulting interaction into a collective narrative which stresses inclusively—suggests that ideas of the importance of nation have become secondary to the importance of acting out of a common base of diversity and creating and engendering a solidarity based upon the very differences between people. As the young American Wardell documented in a diary he kept while visiting Japan: “As was so often the case, I could become part of this group precisely because of my *differentness*” (Wardell, 1995).

And here we see just how powerful that familial/collective connection is. That reconfigured internal, local experience drives the collective imagination to incorporate whatever the nature of this social detail is. And then the resulting collective imagination feeds back to order and determine a face-to-face interaction based on an intuitive understanding of that local detail. In this case, of course, the key aspect of this reproduction of the hermeneutic circle has been diversity, and its movement from the locale to the collective, and then back to the “global-local” transnational interactions which young people are increasingly experiencing.

This increase in actual transnational interaction between Japanese and non-Japanese is significant. Over the last decade there has been a massive increase in young Japanese travellers, exchange students and backpackers visiting Korea, China, Taiwan,

Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Indonesia. This new exchange of information and experiences between Japan and its Asian neighbours has spurred huge domestically led interest in Asia. Television programs documenting backpacker travels around Asia (Gekiteki-kikou {Shinya-tokkyu} '96-'98]) and the books upon which the travels are based⁴⁹ focus on interactions between Japanese and other Asians and have been hugely popular with younger people.

Likewise, through their consumption of other Asian products – figurative and real – we see how older ideas of a Japan as ‘higher’ up an evolutionary scale are diluted and deconstructed by a keenly developing interest in what would have been – under a ranked power model -- ‘periphery’ cultures (see Denoon et al., 1996):

“I don’t have that much interest in going around the sights of Europe, or visiting the Statue of Liberty,” said Jun, a street-wise 20 year old. “India is where it’s at. Just look at the amazing music it is producing of late -- sort of fusion stuff – the traditional and the modern man – excellent! It’s really getting popular in some of the circles I move in now.”

“No, I’d like to spend a year or two in Thailand. I am interested in Europe and America, but they don’t interest me as much as somewhere like Thailand—all that wonderful food and colourful dress!” (21 year old female, Kurume)

Consuming and celebrating some of the products that other Asian (and ‘non-Western’) peoples produce—and rejecting previously “high ranking” nations in favour of

⁴⁹ These books are by Kōtaro Sawaki, published by Shincho-bunko

celebrating them— is one important way in which young Japanese are beginning to change how the outside world is perceived in Japan; these images are then fed back into an evolving notion of what it is to be Japanese, as Noriko helps to demonstrate above in her educating of her father. In this, younger people are enlarging and replenishing their sense of collective national membership in important ways.

Indeed, we could suggest that their national imagining is based on an engagement with each other in a kind of diverse network, which, while generated from their initial statements of national membership, soon elevates them both above and beyond a sense of national identity into a shared common (with other peoples) reality and timeframe. This could be supported by the fact that an increasing turn towards identifying Asianness, rather than Japaneseness, points to a new historical marker for the development of this alternative collective—one that goes back to “pre-cultural” beginnings of a common Asian civilisation.

These newer conceptions of nation then, go beyond the idea that we act out of our ideas of ourselves as national beings *first and foremost*. They replace this trend by taking multi-national collectives and making solidarities out of them. While rooting oneself in what we can call a ‘passport’ national narrative—the nation used as a means to access common history—does still represent a search for legitimisation in the social interactive realm, there is one main difference: these identities do not in any way alter our perception of the human being in front of us. Quite the contrary, such a view renders the other as an ‘insider’ to our efforts to conjure an of-the-moment solidarity out of our common diversity.

Seeing our nations as passports to a diverse multicultural reality does not negate their importance, however. As Sugiyama observes, "... world citizenship does not mean that people can and should renounce their national origin or cultural identity. The national bonds of common purpose need to be replenished and enlarged, not eliminated." (1992: 99). Indeed, as we have seen, it has been a movement away from feeling inferior about Japan's place in the world to confidently believing in spontaneous establishment of intercultural connections between people which suggests that the development of secure and grounded national identities is an important stage in the development of the transnational collective identities I have identified.

The Precedents of a transnationally imagined collective

We have identified some of the movements that the hermeneutic circle takes in propagating this new transnational national set of narratives and understandings—how local diversity makes diverse collectives and vice-versa. Now let us turn to re-examine how it got nudged in the direction that it did—how it found a way out of its homogeneous revolutions. In Part Two we saw that younger Japanese were producing their identities from what we described as a community of mass consumption. Due to the ways in which we see transnational interaction occurring for the young, we can perhaps suggest that increased access to choice and diversity which such a community personifies allows young people to continue this 'consumption-led' 'buying' of a diverse range of social and imaginative products from what Mathews (2000) calls the "cultural supermarket". At the heart of their ability to tune into individuals is a kind

of embedded understanding that they and others all now inhabit such a supermarket and that therefore even if we have not made the same choices (of lifestyles, cultural traditions or ideologies), we are still shopping “in the same store.” Thus, the forms of “club-like” solidarity we see in the local arenas are here expanded to define and determine the way that Japaneseness is placed within a relativised global setting. So one of the precedents of these expanded national narratives can be seen to be *improved access to choice and diversity* on the local “community” level.

Again it is important to stress the important of the *local* here. There is a temptation when talking of post-national, transnational identities, to get caught up in the idea that globalisation (or worse) westernisation is somehow behind the transitions we observe. Quite the contrary is the case according to my argument: the local worlds of people changing in highly contextual response to industrialisation and modernity become reconfigured generationally, and these generational differences then give rise to new needs to incorporate choice and diversity into the resulting local and, in turn, collective solidarities and worldviews. These understandings that young people increasingly have of themselves in the world, then, come to people through experience in their *locales* – through increasing exposure to *internal* diversity and access to choice, and the resulting transitions that challenge the thinking of older generations. Thus to see strangeness and foreignness within allows it to be incorporated into a collective reality without.

The improved access to choice over the generation, in turn, needs to be made real and concrete by expressing it within the contexts of the collective⁵⁰. Such choice doesn't mean much if it cannot be expressed in the collective identity—if it does not find collective representation the hermeneutic circle will not be completed. Here Mathews uncovers a contradiction:

“One should stand up for one's country and protect its cultural tradition”/“One should be free to shape one's life as one chooses” – we tend to believe both of these principles, despite the fact that they are contradictory...

(2000: 19)

The values of choice, Mathews sees, clash in the conception of the collective imagination versus the individual agency. I believe we can resolve this apparent conflict, however, by applying again the idea that familial and collective worlds and identities complement, rather than oppose, one another. What Mathews does not take into account is that our collectives *are expressions* of our individual and localised worlds. Thus rather than seeing individualism and collectivism as two opposing factors, we can illustrate that they give life to one another. As I have been demonstrating throughout this thesis, our families and communities give rise to the kinds of people we seek to make real in the larger worlds of the culture and nation—the interplay of the familial and collective worlds. So where Mathews says that “One's cultural choices must fit within one's social world, which is more limited”, I suggest that it is our social world which gives rise to these decisions about where to fit into the fabric of the collective. It is our perceived sense of mobility that orders both

⁵⁰ This is the same as the Jains needing to ground their abstract ideas in real concrete interaction as we observed in Part One (Carrithers, 1996).

the familial and collective in tandem, not the playing out of “society” on the one hand and the “individual” on the other.

This notion of how important relative local mobility is to a mobility of the collective imagination, is neatly expressed by Kei in a reflection on the extent to which past “enclosed” community attitudes towards foreign travel in Amatetsu prohibited the growth of Japanese national identity beyond its shores.

“People wouldn’t have believed that you were able to go abroad to somewhere like America. Even somewhere in Asia would have been quite strange. During the late seventies and early eighties it cost over 200,000 yen⁵¹ for a one-way trip to somewhere like the States. Say that you’re off to somewhere like New York for a ‘holiday’ and you would have had a few strange looks, not to mention some serious expressions of jealous discontent: ‘Who the fuck do you think you are?--that kind of thing.

“You wouldn’t want to expose yourself like that; at least not if you wanted a kind of harmonious relationship with your fellow community members. As you have no doubt seen, these communities can be fragile places, and they become even more so as people get separated through having certain statuses and money. Going abroad was to say that you were somehow special, and therefore different from everyone else. And not many people would want to risk the ostracism – the sort of “who the fuck to you think you are?”-ness.”

⁵¹ Approximately 1000 GBP or 1600 USD

“Now, of course, it’s totally different. For a start, travel is much more affordable and so people can actually consider taking trips without saving up for months and months. And young people now pretty much do what they want, and there is almost a competition between their elders about whose children are the most well travelled— ‘My son’s going to England to study’, ‘Well my daughter’s off to America for the second time this year’.”

Kei’s comments are fascinating in that they help tie together two important and complementary observations. Firstly, that the sanctions of the local communities were not just active on the real local level interactive realm, but operated too to limit the imagined and physical borders of the nation. One ought to be content with the lowest common denominator of one’s fellows’ borders, and to step beyond them was to alienate oneself from the enclosed solidarity of the community. Secondly, Kei’s comments also reaffirm that young people are interacting with a changed format of the community – beginning to determine it in many ways, injecting it with a new pluralism. And thus, while for Kei and older generations the legacy of enclosed community solidarity prevails and inhabits older people’s collective national identity, younger people—through their alternative access to more multicultural communities—leapfrog such limitations and engage with a fully accessible set of imaginative and physical possibilities which, in turn, expand the conceptual framework of their national—and global—membership.

Again, we see here that it has been the transitions we have seen people make on the local levels of their existence that have prompted these newer imaginative ideas. And more precisely we have observed how access to choice has grounded itself into

generational values (of diversity and pluralism) which has in turn engendered a re-conception of the limits of the collective identity—who it includes and who it doesn't. This has been a result of modernity-driven change in the way that families and communities are interacted within and made. We have also explored the corresponding changes of proximity and intergenerational relationships, and the significant knock-on effects these changes have had on the structuring of collective identities and worldviews.

The Global Citizen

Anderson powerfully illustrated how the nation state was based upon a new set of conceptual tools and technologies which allowed us to imagine human life in our geographical slice occurring simultaneously. Have we been able to say that we have seen a similar leap in the conceptualisation of the collective consciousness—that younger people are beginning to imagine themselves as part of a new kind of collective, one characterised by a transnational common reality?

Some young people are now among those most at home in the global ecumene itself, footloose and uncommitted enough to spread their period of liminality over two or three continents, quickly cultivating the desirable literacies when media technologies change and new symbolic forms become available. What happens to them as they get older? In a two-steps-forward, one-step-back fashion, they may become adults, too, but perhaps not quite the same kind of adults as their parents were.

(Hannerz, 1996: 29)

Certainly it seems that the young are, in many industrialised countries, seeking out and finding alternative expressions of their locally experienced diversity in new collective constructs that acknowledge simultaneous transnational existence—indeed require it (see also Amit-Talai, 1995). However, the degree to which these models of diversity can survive into an adulthood that may make a variety of claims upon individual choice and freedom as these young people grow older is impossible to predict.

In addition to the problem of unpredictability as to what extent these newer transnational collectives are permanent rather than transitory features, the similarities between global citizens and nationalists pose another problem when it comes to identifying transnational identities as “new”. That is to say that however much the nation state represented a heightened sense of one’s affiliations—a road-in to access new imaginative and social opportunities—global citizenship, or transnationalism, does exactly the same thing—it promises an expanded membership with others. Both also reflect the quality of experience that people have in their locales. Just as older people have sought to reflect what Handa described earlier as their “special” affiliations to each other through their nation, so now younger people reach for a better collective representation of their diverse and multi-contextual local interactions and relations.

Again, modernity has not brought us anything new here. We are all still seeking the same things from our social lives. But modernity has altered the contexts of those

lives, and it has created generations so particular in their need to adapt to its fast and far-reaching effects as to be completely polarised in their definitions of what it is to be mobile, to be social, to be part of a community, and to be Japanese. The children of Japan's modernity are not, in essence, any different from one another in that they have been exposed to its general process, but yet they are profoundly separate in the fact that they exist at particular points along an adjustment to that process—and therefore to each other.

On a related track, Wulff (1995:2) reminds us that anthropologists are always behind real people in advancing the debates of the time. I would like to suggest that many of the transitions of identity which I have attributed to so-called 'young people' have, in actual fact, been initiated and propelled by older people, in small degrees, for two or three generations (see also Sakurai, 2003). The fact that such change is now observable by anthropologists and social-scientists alike suggests the subtle ways in which older and now younger generations have been inciting change in the familial arenas of their lives (see White and Mathews, 2003).

Likewise, we mustn't forget one of the most important relative shifts: that as generations all over the world have been challenging their internal status quo, so they too have induced pluralism, and attempted to rid themselves of one-size-fits-all collective identities (Amit-Tamil, 1995). There have been countless efforts (like Yanagi, see earlier section, Culture) to emphasise the peripheries of the nation state in order to re-order and re-configure the "centre" (see again Gerow, 2002). That we have more opportunities to understand ourselves as cases among cases, not same versus different but as various with and against various, has been achieved through

transitions we have experienced on the familial level – and subsequent ones that these have put into motion.

The shifting salience of national membership in Japan, as we might expect⁵², is a manifestation of the internal shifts from determinism to pluralism on the cultural level (see last section, Culture). Thus, as people come to understand that their nations are seen as singular entities, personifying and characterising a culturally embedded set of personalities and types of approach, so the traditional construct ceases to be able to contain the newly configured cultural reality. The nation, however, is not rejected, but developed as a kind of membership card – a passport for global manoeuvring. The more social and imaginative mobility an individual has access to, the more that they use their national identity in this way.

At the extreme ‘free’ ends of this community of global citizens, the citizenship that such nationhood expounds is even seen as malleable. I could live in another country for a period of time and become a member of their nation state—indeed, there is a growing literature documenting the experiences of people who see themselves in this way: Pico, 2002, as well as innovative anthropological examinations of ‘finding home’ in transnational realities (Mathews, 2000; Morley, 2000; Hannerz, 1996). At the other end of this spectrum are those who identify so strongly with their nation, that, as we saw in Part One, they see it as intimately bound-up in their very personalities and cultural identity. The latter has slowly given way to the former as people have, in their local environments, and with and against their older generations, negotiated new freedoms, both in their imaginations and in their social reality.

⁵² See Gellner (1997) for a discussion on the links between culture, social organisation and nation.

This shift is perhaps what makes Eriksen (1997) see that it is the nation's "*emotional* impact (that) is becoming difficult to maintain..." (pp. 118). For as we have suggested, the fundamental ways in which interaction is now ordered through common diversity represents an involvement in an open emotional template of sociality that leaves itself available for a huge variety of possible solidarities networks and collective identities. Compared to the more prevalent forms of national identity represented by older people, these newer identities provide highly appropriate flexible templates of social interaction—transnational and multinational solidarities can be created spontaneously. We can see evidence for this in the way that, as nations once did, they again provide a highly meaningful and contemporary set of understandings of ourselves, set into particular notions of time and space.

Alongside such examples run ideas of how our respective nations fit into the overall picture of social and capital movements, and imperial and post colonial realities (see Hardt & Negri, 2001). Again, all of these understandings of the way that we have been responding to globalising systems of social and economic change help to put what would have previously been separate national constructs into a commonly experienced timeframe. Younger people's conception of nation can perhaps be seen as the result of a modern capitalist system running its course over societies in similar ways. So the pop bands of Japan can be increasingly seen to be the result of a corporate body that hires producers, songwriters, and talent spotters to create the end result. 'The band' is manufactured, and in Japan, in America, and in the United Kingdom, this is increasingly obvious as a further 'phase' in the modification and capitalisation of society (see also Hutnyk from Morley, 2000: 234). All societies are

victim to these processes and therefore instead of a nation-specific identity, a transnational collective imagination seems more appropriate to finding a sense of place in the contemporary world (see Mathews, 2000).

Certainly all this is directly related to the forces of industrialisation and modernity. But the movement of these processes through all societies is far more powerful than just aligning certain industries in the same way transnationally. As I have attempted to show, modernity rocks familial systems and ways of life, produces often violent needs to assert new collective consciousness, and changes the entire social landscape from we produce our cultures and our societies. Ultimately, then, it is these changes which have led, through a generational process of change and adaptation, to the new forms of collective identity, and to the contemporary opportunity to connect with the narratives of global citizenship.

In all this, we see an interesting process brought full circle: the familial world creates the precedents for our socialisation, moulding our roles and personal identities, and capturing a conception of national identity. As we progress through the generational stages of social change – on the levels of family, community culture and nation – so we rework our composite experience of these transgressions back into our families, so that our children have our understandings of the world as their legacy of inheritance. The national identity of the previous generation – as a vocalisation of our personal and collective experience -- acts upon our children and forms the subsequent roles and identities which they then work into their conception of national identity, and so it goes on.

However, in the reworking of national identity – in its shifting salience – we have observed a slight change in this seemingly unalterable pattern. For if national identity is somehow being superseded by an identity of a more transient relativised variety, then our children may have little to react to. By not allowing what Kashiwagi calls a ‘healthy’ gap between the generations, Japanese youth may rob society of its most important change agent. “If there is no gap, society cannot grow. With a gap, young people can change society in a good direction. But if they just go along with their elders there is no progress.” (Kashiwagi quoted in White 1994: 218-19). It seems only time will tell us of the possible identities and mechanisms of change of the future, but certainly the role of generational change in bringing about senses of a new globally connected Japan today is profound (White & Mathews, 2003).

In attempting to chart the transitions people go through in increasingly complex societies, Durkheim explores further in his consideration of the collective consciousness:

The more differences between the individual portraits that have served to make a composite portrait, the more imprecise the latter is. It is true that local collective consciousness can retain their individuality within the general collective consciousness and that, since they encompass narrower horizons, they can more easily remain concrete. But we know that gradually they vanish into the general consciousness as the different social segments to which they correspond fade away.

(1984: 230)

For many of Japan's young people, it is the social segments of the local and global worldviews and communities of their elders that are slowly fading away. The new way of interacting and ordering diversity creates for the young a diverse matrix of relations which influence and re-order their collective imaginations along new and multicultural tracks. In understanding and rebuilding Japan as it exists in the wider world, young people have begun to interface with a new form of collective consciousness. Their ideas of national distinctiveness have shifted from their elders' concepts of bounded notions of their own time and space to larger ones of a transient, transnational existence that uses national citizenship as a passport to gain a transnational sense of membership and therefore better reflect their perceived 'horizons'. And in so doing, the old traditionalisms and ethnocentrisms, which were really never tradition at all but modern invention (see Vlastos, 1998), are beginning, it seems, to fade away.

In this perhaps Japanese young people have begun to answer Yamazaki's call for Japan to 'rediscover identity',

by re-examining their presumed cultural uniqueness... setting preconceived notions aside we must polish our self image in the tide of internationalisation and temper it through cultural friction... if (we) succeed in doing this, Japan may be able to make an important contribution to the creation of a truly universal culture in the twenty-first century, thereby consummating a true internationalisation.

(Yamazaki quoted by Sugiyama, 1992: 73).

The degree to which these new expanded forms of identification – this globalism -- will infiltrate the less imaginatively mobile – and there are young people with little access to these newer definitions of mobility – depends very much on how much local environments continue to provide experiences of diversity and examples of its benefits. Also, there are many potential hazards in the forms of global citizenship I have sketched out here. Identities can close, it seems, as quickly as they can become open and tolerant. In the next (concluding) part we shall see how future-proof these changes have been, and what dangers threaten them. I shall investigate to what extent Japan can act a case study, and as a forerunner, in the tracing of patterns – past present and future -- of transnational culture from its very genesis in our families and communities to the centre of influence upon how we interact with people from other cultures and nations and see ourselves positioned in the world.



The girls entered the large studio room in their sweat pants and T-shirts, flushed with the heat of the bath.

“Right, my turn!” announced Kora and grabbed a nearby toiletry bag before descending the stairs.

“How was it?” Moto asked the girls.

“Lovely!” they replied. “That powder stuff is really good, almost like the real thing.”

We busied ourselves with a bit of clearing up: the plates from dinner placed in the sink, empty packets of cigarettes in the bin. It was approaching 2 am and we were preparing for hours of the morning where we would all find our own areas of the room to bed down, to chat and eventually to sleep.

But while we were still squashing empty beer cans and readying the glass table between the two sofas for its last influx of drinks and ashtrays, we heard a car coming up the mountain and saw its lights emerge through the trees.

“I wonder who that is?” pondered Moto.

The car reached the top of the long drive and Megumi said: “Hey, it’s Akira!”

“Oh good!” said Mayumi. “He said he might show up. Bit late though... still, better late than never.”

Akira was an occasional visitor to our gatherings. Being Kora’s son, I sensed he sometimes found it awkward to socialise with his father and his much younger friends.

“And he’s brought his guitar!” said Megumi, peering out of the window.

“It seems the night is not yet quite over,” commented Moto with a knowing smile.

“We have some singing to do...”

The car door slammed and moments later we heard Akira open the downstairs door and enter the cabin.

Kora must have heard too, because we heard his voice say very clearly—and jovially—in response to his son’s loud “Hi!”,

“What the fuck you doing here?”

Upstairs, the four of us smiled, and Aki offered a grunt from his *syochu*-induced slumber.

PART FOUR—

The Divisions of Identity in Society

“Didn’t expect you, Akira!” said Moto happily as Akira appeared at the top of the stairs, guitar and backpack attached.

“Yeah, well I tried to call you guys – actually you, Megumi – a couple of times but I guess you’re switched off or something?”

Megumi took out her phone and peered at it suspiciously. “Oh what! I’m not getting a signal! That’s weird; it was fine earlier.” She moved over to the large glass sliding doors that separated the studio from the outside balcony, opened them and stepped out holding the phone outstretched in front of her. Akira set down his guitar and bag.

“Oh there we go... got it!” said Megumi from the balcony. “Bloody mountains!”

“Anyway, what’ya all been up to?” asked Akira.

“Well,” replied Moto, “Bruce here has been treated to *kita-no-kuni-kara*.” Akira raised his eyebrows at me in heartfelt confederation, “We all ate *yaki-niku*, Aki’s been asleep for hours, and we’re halfway through taking our baths, where you will have noticed your Dad is now.”

“Gripping stuff. Well, I suppose during all that time you’ve been drinking like fish and I have a lot of catching up to do?”

I fetched Akira a drink from the bar and we saluted his arrival. After taking his first few sips from the cold can of Yebisu beer, he set it down and reached for his guitar. Strumming a slow rhythmic beat he begun to sing Nagabuchi's latest release: Sky.

The town that does not sleep

In the dark backstreets of Tokyo

The stench of yellow urine

A man with maddened face is staring at me

from the shadow of a telegraph pillar

with unbearably sad eyes

Is there any gentleness?

Is there any shame?

Roar at the sky,

Don't lose your head in the wind,

Hotter than fire

Stand your ground in the swell.

Akria's guitar style was well practised and he beat out the chord changes as powerfully as he sung the emotive melody. We were pretty much in full swing when Kora ascended the stairs to join us. He did a dance behind Akira and we laughed at his performance.

The song was over and we all clapped. Kora sat next to his son on the blue sofa.

“Let’s have a go then, boy!” he said, gesturing to the guitar. “I’ll play something with real meaning...”.

Amazingly, Aki had remained comatosed throughout Akira’s entire performance, but when Kora began strumming the first few lines of *Nagarakawa*, a traditional ‘*enka*’ ballad about the thoughts of a flowing river, Aki’s eyes opened and he sang softly along as if in a dream:

*I am the flowing river,
Where the birds alight to drink,
And images of you take to flight.*

*I am the flowing river,
Remember me in your heart,
For in me your sweet reflection lives on.*

Few people know that despite its status as traditional Japanese *enka*, *Nagarakawa* was made famous by the Taiwanese singer Teresa Teng, who sings it so perfectly and with such authenticity that many older Japanese men – who make up the bulk of the *enka* listening population – refuse to believe that the singer is not Japanese.

I felt sure Aki would not know this, and also that it was not a coincidence that Kora sang the song now in the presence of his son: Akira’s mother – Kora’s wife -- is Taiwanese. I wondered briefly if there was some kind of solidarity being played out

here between the two men – an idea that they both were somehow aware of worlds beyond the visible, had access to information and experience outside the taken-for-granted norms of their fellow countrymen. I was to learn, however, that if there was such an attempt, it did not sit well with Akira who disapproved of his father's way of life in many ways.

Later, after the singing and the dancing, I found myself alone with Kora and Akira on the balcony. The others had retired to bed and we had moved outside to continue to talk. Our words were hushed against the still of the moonlit night, while burning cigarette embers flashed like tiny lanterns as they moved from hand to mouth.

“So how is life in Fukuoka?” said Kora to his 24 year old son who was trying to earn a living as a musician, playing the odd gig and working in a bar part time.

“Oh, OK, you know.”

“Band going well?”

“Not bad. Got a couple of new songs that we're pretty happy with... How are you Dad?” Akira's tone was suspicious.

“Well, you know, cracking on.”

“Still drinking too much, I see. Mum OK?”

“Yeah, she’s good.”

Akira turned to me and said,

“My Dad lives as though he was my age, without responsibilities. You wouldn’t think sometimes that he had a son, two daughters in university and a wife, would you?”

I remained silent.

Akira grunted disapprovingly. “You can turn on all the entertainment and be the fun host, Dad, but things kinda crash down on you when it comes to just playing the husband, or father, don’t they?”

There was that slightly uncomfortable pause which comes when intimate thoughts are voiced in the presence of strangers.

Kora turned to me with a sigh. “There is no one more critical of you than your own children.”

“But somehow that is right,” he continued philosophically. “Somehow that is a good thing. That we can be so critical, I mean, it shows us something about how far society has come, doesn’t it?”

“Like I would have loved to have been able to talk to my Dad in the same way as you talk to me, son.” Akria’s turned to look at his father. “I mean, I have pictures of him all over this place and I remember him with such fondness, yet I could never say what I thought about things to him directly – could never move beyond the established rules or etiquette of his world – the world of our community.

“And so when I talk to you, and you tell me how you feel about things and how you approve or whatever I do or don’t do, I feel somehow both jealous – because I wanted that freedom – and proud, because, in many ways, despite my downfalls, I helped give it to you.”

Intergenerational Change and Mobility

We have seen throughout the exploration of change in Japanese identities common threads of generational difference and departure. We have seen how in each subsequent generation, a sense of connectedness to wider worlds and freedoms has occurred – how the very idea of what mobility means has shifted and changed. These transitions have become embedded in the generational roadmaps and identities of Japanese people, and have set forth the contexts for the re-imagination and reinvention of Japan as a collective.

The generational history of Japan that I have painted within these pages is one which has attempted to illustrate how many of the young people with whom I came into contact conceived a local and collective world around them united in a common

diversity. I have tried to uncover the path of intergenerational relations and change that have led to these local and global worldviews. Here, in this final section, I would like to further summarise the main thrust of this work's conclusions, and then move on to suggest a series of trajectories in which this generation may move Japan, and even the world (for there are commonalities with other youth cultures observed elsewhere, see Amit-Talai, 1995), in the years to come and how we might begin to define this influence and phase of change in the light of the findings.

Firstly, in setting out the summary, it is perhaps important to note that there are three *types* of summation to be made here in response to the theoretical and conceptual concerns of this work⁵³. The first of these is to review the transitions and observations I have made and to re-centre and emphasise the applicability of the concept of mobility to the process of generational change identified herein. The second is to set out what is 'new' about these transitions and how they have reconfigured the social worlds of younger people in contrast to their elders, examining, in turn, how these factors can be more generally observed in Japanese society through related research. Lastly, the third summation reflects upon and clarifies key sociological factors that can be seen to be responsible for these transitions, illustrating how patterns of consumption and production may be powerful interpretative models through which to understand change in the relative mobility of generations.

1. Reviewing generational and cultural transitions through the locus of mobility

⁵³ Because this work is looking at a process of change, it is difficult to provide a succinct conclusive summary which does not examine the nature of transitions from different standpoints. I have attempted to thus state the conclusions succinctly within these three sections.

Throughout this work, I have attempted to demonstrate the salient role that mobility plays in ordering and re-ordering local and collective worlds through and between the generations. In the first chapter of Part Two's *Familial Worlds*, for instance, Seijou's case study emphasises the degree to which people in the middle generation can be seen to inhabit a world precariously balanced between familial forms implanted by the Meiji nation builders, and one that is seeking to free itself from the older generation's social rules and sanctions. We saw that the restrictions put upon Seijou by his parents have developed within him a strong desire to break apart from his inherited familial structures. Indeed, we heard that for Seijou, it was an effort to give his daughters a freer existence that was, for him, an expression of a desire to break away from his intergenerationally received norms. If he was unable to find a 'way out' for himself, he could at least provide the conditions for relative freedom and mobility in the next generation.

In a historical review of the Japanese family (Part Two), however, we saw how even Seijou's parent's familial systems were a product of a search for a sense of mobility in *their* respective time. In the post-Meiji agrarian communities, several manifestations of industrialisation – money, machines, nationhood – were reordering the nature of the relationship between the family and the state. And it was within a local environment of shifting status relationships and labour forces that many *ies* solidified the hierarchical-vertical familial relations that became the limits of Seijou's later social world.

The baby boomers of post-war Japan (the middle generation), then, throughout an era (60s and 70s) which put into circulation powerful narratives of independence from

authorities and establishments, became a generation characterised by their attempts to consolidate new-found desires for independence with the still very present sanctioning family systems imposed by their pre-war influenced parents (see also Sakurai, 2003). This was yet another way in which a search for a particular sort of mobility—the search for ‘independence’—began to influence the passive and active efforts of people to change society (see also Kotani, 2003).

But perhaps like Kora’s attempts to be a role model of freedom won to his son (above), the Takayamas showed us how this middle generation of baby boomers may have gone too far in removing a sense of grounded familial tradition from their broad successes in creating more separated and independent nuclear families. For we see that one generation on, in the case of the Takayamas, that it is not enough to have complete freedom from inherited familial systems. The Takayamas, despite what seems like an unlimited range of choices as to how to structure their own family, want to replant supportive extended family and community models for what they see as the benefit of their next generation⁵⁴. Here again, for the third time since Meiji, the representation mobility has altered, now being defined around the provision of a grassroots set of values, customs and even rules which provide a springboard for rooting opportunity in familial stability.

If the generational history of the Japanese family illustrated how the ongoing search for mobility has set apart three generations of Japanese people in their efforts to respond to a changed social reality with a social system to suit, then the section on the

⁵⁴ Perhaps, as Giddens suggests in his critique of modernity: too much freedom can ‘collapse’ a world out, leaving it unrooted and empty (1991)?

community illustrated how these changes became salient in the construction and deconstruction of neighbourhood relations and memberships.

Again, we saw that it was with the intrusion of national loyalties – a direct result of nation building designs of the Meiji elites -- that localised forms of solidarity began to break down through a displacement of local loyalties by a new need to align first and foremost with the aims of the state. Community solidarity took on a competitive and increasingly sanctioning role precisely because it was considered ‘the way forward’ or to ‘take new opportunities’ to pursue status and opportunities which found symmetry with the agendas and perceived role of the Japanese nation state.

For the baby boomers (and even for many of the older people in this study) the degree to which this competitive solidarity made claims on the freedom of action and behaviour became, in time, stifling rather than releasing. This was partly due to the fact that the national ideology which propped up this solidarity was brought tumbling down by defeat in the Second World War. And once more, it was the baby boomers who began to reconfigure community relations so as to induce a yet-again generationally-revised sense of mobility. For many, this simply meant getting out of one’s community in order to avoid the left-over social sanctions. But for those without the ability to leave – or with more stringent family obligations that forced them to remain (like Seijou) – the task became to induce mobility in the next generation by separating their children from the pressures of the community. Again, we saw with Seijou how this decision was a conscious one.

Moving down a generation to the young of Amatetsu, we see that both strategies have been ‘successful’ in driving a wedge between the remnants of community activities and the social circles of young people, which are now almost completely divorced from one another (see Part Two, Community). However, just as in the realm of the family, the now commonly experienced plurality of the youth experience – their highly diverse and interlinked communities of consumption that act as ‘alternatives’ to a hamlet-based solidarity – have found a way to reintegrate to older community systems and structures. In this case, for both the young and the old, it has been locating a sense of geographical commonality through the ‘exposed’ systems of thought and access (reminiscent of pre-Meiji rural community structures) that has come to define what it is to be mobile and to pursue contemporary opportunities for self-expression on the community level.

It is not only in *Familial Worlds* where I emphasised that pre-industrial forms of self-expression become re-introduced into a youth experience consisting of plurality and choice. Even more forcefully, we saw how in the negotiation and expression of *Collective Identities* by some of my young informants, it was age-old visions of regional ‘*han*’ (or prefectural) identities that came to mark out the diverse ways which they identified themselves in a wider diversely imagined Japanese collective (see Part Three, Culture). Here again, it was not enough to pursue the multiple strands of a plural existence marked out by access to unlimited choices. To pursue contemporary opportunities – to be mobile – is to build plurality into a container that makes explicit the drawing on tradition. In so doing, young people model earlier (1920s and 30s) smaller-scale (and less successful) efforts to do the same (see Steele, 1995).

In the chapter on cultural identity, I also made the first of many observations to come that this new need to imagine a cultural collective as diverse stemmed from an ongoing re-negotiation of Japan-in-the-world ideas which represented the changing state of subsequent generations' locales. Just like the familial systems, collective identities had developed in parallel to needs to assert the legitimacy, credibility and expressions of individuals in particular contexts. Thus, homogeneous cultural collectives were seen to be made in direct response to the non-acceptance of Japanese in the contexts of a Western-dominated world power structure. Also evident was how other Asians were worked into these narratives, at first as an inclusive category, and later as an other in the advance of particular competitive notion of world place and ranking defined vis-à-vis the West.

As these ideas have moved through the generations, I observed that, increasingly, the diversity that young people are experiencing *locally* begins to need to find a continuous expression in the collective imagination. The unitary models of ranked power derived from the efforts of the previous generations' worldviews give way to the pursuit of mobility which places open and diversely-rooted collective mirrors and identities at the forefront of the collective imagination. This signals a significant departure from modernity's first 'premade' collective narratives which define particular boundaries from the outset, to the creation of 'of the moment' solidarities which are constructed by diverse individuals using common threads of collective identification across cultural and national borders.

This observation allowed me to talk in terms of an increase in the ability for individuals to construct their own collective senses of solidarity. The power of the

cultural bearers who had originally been at the control of the dissemination of collective narratives and resources had been passed down to ordinary people, among whom, the young at least, were taking on collective identity construction for themselves.

In the chapter on nation, this all became more explicit as I argued that underlying the entire youth experience was exposure to a local and collective diversity that somehow made the nation-state a somewhat outdated container for the expression of comparatively relativised identities and worldviews. ‘Old’ homogeneous identities seemed to be preventing youth from acting from the diverse templates they formed in their locales. The confidence with which young people approach the outside world and interact with foreigners illustrated this connection well. And so I saw that collective mobility, the envisioning of new potentialities, has become aligned with a diverse social reality, so the constant pursuit of contextually defined opportunities and potentialities has ‘given way’ to new self-concepts, social organisational systems and familial and collective identities.

In understanding all of this together, I have attempted to see (Part Three, Nation) how any sense of global citizenship is linked to the relativisation of the individual in both the local and collective arenas of social life. That is to say that the individual can reach a position wherein he can determine the re-configuration of narrative and place whenever it should suit. In the contexts of these transitions of what it means to be mobile, contemporary definitions achieve in part a kind of social mobility which allows not merely movement *per se*, but constant adaptability – to be able to dodge, to reverse, to transgress and to realign the notions of belonging with the life course and

changing circumstance –spontaneously to create multicultural (internal or external⁵⁵) solidarities.

2. What is ‘new’ about the worlds of younger people in contrast to those of their elders?

In asking this question, I shall be restating some of what I have already observed above. However, I feel it is important to set out the conclusions as they relate both to the chronological progress of mobility and to further extrapolate the detail of the young generation’s social world in direct comparison to what has gone before. Firstly, then, in asking what is ‘new’ about Japan’s young generation, it is important to reiterate that today’s youth are a product of a complex process of adaptation to change set into motion by previous generations—they are part of a history of social transformation. Indeed, in all of the four subsections of this study—family, community, culture, nation—I suggest that it has been the parents and grandparents of Japan’s contemporary youth who have had to grapple with the most difficult generational transitions and adaptations to new patterns of thought and social participation (c.f. Sakurai, 2003). The familial systems and collective constructs to which they have been exposed and socialised seem those most at variance with the new worlds in which they have found themselves, and we have seen them attempt to find a way through these divides in many ways.

However, the efforts of the Meiji modernity’s first and middle generation have been fundamental in clearing the way for a host of generational developments in how

⁵⁵ I suggest that multicultural does not have to mean multinational for youth. A “multicultural” reality can refer to many *different sorts* of Japanese people together—an eclectic mix of styles and attitudes even in one’s own race *feels* “multicultural” in its mixing of subjectivities.

Japanese society is being experienced and conceived by the younger generation. In the second part of this concluding summary, then, I will set out what I see as three key areas in which social change is occurring both in relation to the conclusions of this work and to other related research which illustrates that these changes may be occurring more broadly in Japanese society. These key areas are: 1) how young people see their lives as offering more choices and alternatives than in the past; 2) how young people interact with each other and with their elders in new ways; and 3) how young people are challenging the legitimacy of institutions.

How young people see their lives as offering more choices and alternatives than in the past

One of the central conclusions of this work is that across a wide spectrum of social experience, young people have a significant range of choices as to how to exist within and imagine their local and collective communities in comparison to their elders. In Part Two, for instance, I focused on the local familial contexts of these new alternatives, and what was particularly evident here was that the construction of stylistic and consumer-driven community groups offered their members many opportunities to choose to express their individual diversity and gain access to a range of lifestyle choices. Earlier in that section, I had also suggested that the approach towards forming family units and managing and choosing the social environments in which children were to be brought up was occurring against a background of increased choice which presented multiple possibilities and configurations of family structure and relations.

In this work, the access to increased choices and alternatives was also a key feature of the younger generation's conception and creation of the Japanese cultural and national identities, as discussed in Part Three. In the section on Culture, access to choice was clearly seen through the myriad of ways in which young Japanese could frame their identities in the contexts of diverse interpretations of 'what it was to be Japanese' alongside other Japanese. Young people, I suggested, were drawing on a range of possible inventions and regional influences in creating for themselves highly diverse and plural *cultural* representations. The fuel for these representations often came from highly traditional cultural and regional narratives that were being excavated from pre-Meiji social life and used to forge a set of stylistic, diverse and highly contemporary identities.

In its emphasis on the familial and collective contexts in which a range of choices and alternatives exist for young people, this work supports the findings of a variety of other studies which together suggest that increased access to choices represents a fundamental generational departure for Japanese society. Nakano and Wagatsuma, for instance, demonstrate that new generational understandings have interacted with the discourse of women's freedom of choice. Young women now think of their lives as offering a variety of alternatives which their mothers never had, and mothers and daughters alike accept this as the way of the world today (2003). Similarly, on the same familial level, Sasagawa (2003) puts access to choice at the centre of her examination of the pursuit of self-fulfillment for young educated mothers. Sasagawa helps us to add to Nakano/Wagatsuma's understanding that access to choice has established itself in the workings and structure of families.

On the level of youth communities too, Ackermann, (2003) in his examination of responses to social pressure, demonstrates how young people forge a sense of belonging to their own generationally-contextual world—a world which operates under rules that necessitate choice. Ackermann explains that *keitai* [mobile phones] allow youth to choose which groups and relationship networks to maintain and which to drop, and facilitate a world dictated by a vast number of potential relationship alternatives unknown to their elders. In Miller's work (2003), the conclusions of this thesis in relation to choice on the community and cultural level are powerfully supported as we see the inherent diversity of youth "communities" or "subcultures" feeding the media industry in what becomes a youth-driven "loop" of diverse fashions, styles and trends. Young men and women are thus able to draw on a huge variety of options to present alternative ethnic and gender identities. I shall return to the relevance of Miller's work again below.

This thesis's consideration of increased choices and options is limited in its commentary on more general patterns of change. It has given little consideration to what happens to young people when they enter organisations or institutions. Helping to counter this limitation, other studies which explicitly consider empirical examples of young people making life-determining decisions do seem to confirm that they do so from a range of possible options. Mathews (2003), for instance, finds that the majority of his freelancing, non-career track (*furiitaa*) informants insist that they chose for themselves their irregular employment. In the corporate world, too, Mori, (2003) explores how young people are now able to choose to study abroad without the

stigma that once would have followed them upon their return to Japan, and indeed are now rewarded for making what would have been considered unsustainable alternative career choice in the past.

Being able to envisage alternative life courses and choices thus seems to form a central difference between young people and their elders in Japan today. Compared to their elders, young people operate from a diverse range of possibilities, and it is this generational difference that most separates their views of life in Japan. However, as I have noted in the section above, it is important to emphasise that the *actual* decisions that youth make from this range of choices can be drawn from the annals of pre-modern Japanese tradition and therefore we must be careful not to see them as ‘original’ in themselves, but rather containing a variety of alternatives as what represents the key generational departure.

In the context of these recent studies and the whole spectrum of social life that could potentially be considered, this thesis represents only a small slice of how young people embody a range of different choices. This slice, however, relates directly to how choices which revolve around the configuration of relationships and identities inspire the reinvention and imagination of Japan as a collective. In this, the choices I have detailed here relate to significant processes of change involving the construction of cultural, national and global narratives. But before I move on to consider these in more detail in the second section of this chapter, let me now turn to consider how this envisaging of a greater access to alternative lives and identities leads to particular forms of social interaction which may reflect and produce change in Japanese society.

How young people interact with each other and with their elders in new ways

This thesis has attempted to illustrate how youth interaction, in direct contrast to that of the middle or first generation, crosses geographical borders and connects with a diverse popular culture (c.f. Martinez, 1998). In what I broadly characterized as a movement away from operating under the social sanctions of their elders and their associated interactive norms, these young people illustrate how interaction can be ordered through inter-linked and ever-changing stylistic networks of “interest”. In Part Three, I linked the fact that such interaction was occurring on the local community level to the notion that these interactive patterns were then taken on in the ordering and determining of cross-cultural encounters. I thereby illustrated the ways in which the interactive frameworks of youth actively replace previous interactive models based on ‘ranked power’ with ‘passport identities’ which make cross-cultural interaction commonplace.

Such a focus on the new interactive contexts of young people’s social worlds has been recently expanded and exemplified by a range of other complementary writings and perspectives which together provide a convincing body of evidence that interpersonal interaction between young people, and between the young and their elders, has taken new and diverse forms. From Ackermann’s existing and forthcoming work on the particular “communicative strategies” of youth (2003, 2004), to a variety of reflections on the internet as a key access point through which younger people interact without the constraints imposed by publishers, the mass media, or their elders (c.f. Sakurai, 2003; Kotani, 2003), changed patterns of youth interaction are being seen as

specific to the diverse contexts of their generation as opposed to the more rigid social worlds of their elders.

Again, as with the focus on increased choices (above), Miller's (2003) work is closely aligned with the conclusions of this thesis, illustrating broadly the creative and empowering contexts in which youth interaction takes place, and even pointing to the way this may be affecting their interaction with foreign others. Through fashion, her kogals (women who dress up to look afro-Caribbean) and other young people manipulate "sincerity, mockery, and kitsch" and draw upon a wide variety of societal interpretations (bodily, ethnic) in structuring and expressing their interpersonal interaction. Indeed, Miller emphasises, as does this thesis's Part Two's section on community, how young people may form their own communities of the like-minded through the expression of such pluralism, and therefore leave themselves open to the possibility of a variety of inter-racial and intercultural relationships and connections.

When it comes to interaction between older and younger people, this thesis offers what perhaps can be seen as a fresh perspective on the relationship between the younger and older generations by illustrating the way in which young people variously take on the project of 'educating' their elders in the ways and norms of their more plural social experience (Part Two, Community). These young people attempt to integrate their cosmopolitanism into their parents' homes and communities and this observation, although particular to this study, warrants, I suggest, further investigation in order that it might set out in greater detail emerging patterns of generational change. Indeed, the intergenerational patterns of interaction as this young generation gives way to the next would make for an interesting and significant future research project.

Specific also to this study (in the context of available literature on Japan) has been my focus on the suggestion that the rich and diverse set of potentialities where youth gather social interaction, are not just specific to Japan, but may also be seen emerging in the new generations of other societies too (see Amit-Talai, 1995; Brake, 1987; Hannerz, 1996). If this is the case, could we suggest a more globally reaching set of precedents for movements away from ethnocentric nationalisms and towards more inclusive global collective concepts? I will consider this question in the second half of this chapter. But firstly, we need to understand whether the increased choices and alternatives that youth have access to, and the new interactive contexts which arise from these, allow youth any real influence in changing the composition of their wider social order. When the dynamism of the young meets the sturdy steadfastness of the establishment, does the momentum falter, or cause multiple catalytic reactions?

How young people are challenging the legitimacy of institutions

In attempting to evaluate the extent to which young people are overturning the homogeneous narratives endemic to Japan's social order since the Meiji era, this thesis has concentrated solely on the ability of the young to challenge the institution of state-sponsored cultural and national identity. This has been the only institution (outside the changes in the family I outline in Part Two) that I have focused on, so it is perhaps difficult to conclude from this work alone that young people are agents of any other kind of change than the alternatives they bring to conceiving the collective visions of Japaneseness.

On this level, however, in emphasising, celebrating and consuming once periphery or “lower ranked” countries, I have demonstrated how the young are helping to break down an imaginative social order rooted in ethnocentrism. Likewise, their approach to interaction with foreigners, as well as their incorporation of others into what can be broadly seen to be a Japan defined as multi-ethnic, multi-contextual (Part Three), threatens and helps to delegitimise a Japan built from national conceptions which embrace cultural determinism and a one-race approach. Quite clearly, then, young Japanese are attempting to alter the ethnic picture of Japan in the world—or more precisely that one sole ethnic representation is valid for ‘the Japanese’. But how widespread is their influence?

My findings are supported by an increasing range of perspectives and studies that set out to illustrate how young people’s reinterpretations of Japanese ethnicity as alternatives for conceiving society at large are being very influential indeed. Miller’s (2003) young people’s alternative presentations of Japanese ethnicity demonstrate that ideas and peoples that have been historical “others,” from Koreans to African-Americans, are embraced as part of a broader and more diverse “Japaneseness”. This diverse multi-ethnic Japanese vision has already been picked up by media and popular cultural agencies who amplify these new worldviews and thus help to further diversify Japan. Young people may be beginning to have real influence in their delegitimization of the homogeneous status quo, and this concept is powerfully reinforced by the Japanese sociologist and prolific writer Sakurai (2003), who sees these and other efforts as already influential in doing away with conservative conceptions of Japaneseness - by finishing what generations of elders have tried and

failed to do, and finally breaching a “Japaneseness walled off from the world at large” (pp. 28).

In illustrating the ways through which young people’s concerns are legitimized and old institutional frameworks delegitimized around the central pivot of homogeneity, this thesis identifies other areas in Japanese society that are under increasing pressure to adapt to new and diverse youth-driven values. Mori (2003), for instance, illustrates how in the world of corporations, the multicultural experiences of youth are working to break down some of the oldest institutional structural and value systems. His returnees have taken the bold step of being educated by universities overseas, a risk that had until recently made them unemployable by Japanese companies. Today, however, in a Japan pushed into globalization, these returnees hold an important value for organizations, and can no longer, as in past years, be dismissed as “non-Japanese.” In turn, the returnees may choose to work for a company that eschews standard Japanese employment patterns, or they may shake up the more conservative companies that employ them by questioning their elders’ stereotypes of gender or of leadership. All in all, these young returnees, like Japanese young employees as a whole (c.f. Mathews, 2003), are making countless individual decisions and engaging in interactions that may cumulatively work to bring about wider social and institutional change in Japan.

Ultimately, arising from the conclusions that young people have access to greater choices, and adopting new and diverse forms of interaction, and are challenging the dominant collective concept of homogeneity, is the question of whether young people, in all their diversity and cosmopolitanism, will be able to displace the old values

inherent in the institutions of the adult social order with their own. Will they transform, or themselves be transformed by these institutions? An answer is beyond the scope of this work, but future studies will doubtless offer a definitive response to this question⁵⁶. The purpose of this thesis has been to show how the young's challenges to this social order have emerged through a series of historical generational transitions—how a young generation like the one under examination here emerges at all and what can be seen to characterise it in contrast to those generations that have gone before.

3. The sociological precedents for the emergence of Japan's young generation and the current divisions of identity between the young and their elders in society

There have been a variety of attempts to set out the contexts and sociological factors that lie behind social change in Japan, attempts that are seen by Sugimoto (1997) to relate to phases of approaches towards defining Japanese society over the last few decades. For instance, while the modernization theory of the 60s put an emphasis on understanding shifts from traditional to the modern social structures and practices, and examined whether they exemplified the 'expected' changes as set out by key sociologists such as Parsons⁵⁷, the 70s saw a reaction to this phase of plotting out expected or unexpected courses of development. From the late 60s into the late 70s a more particularistic approach was taken and the focus became one of pointing out the

⁵⁶ A recent collection of essays entitled 'Japan's Changing Generations: Are Young People Creating a New Society?' predicts that there is significant capacity for youth to transform the Japanese social order, although it too offers no definitive answer (Mathews and White, 2003).

⁵⁷ Princeton University Press's five-volume set *Social Change in Modern Japan* drew much on Parson's (1951) work.

uniqueness of Japanese psychology (Doi, 1973), interpersonal relations (Reischauer, 1988 [1978]), and social organisation (Nakane, 1970; c.f. Sugimoto, 1997: 15 and Introduction, this volume).

Today, the approach to understanding Japan seems to be a blend of these, what have become, I suggest, two foundational yet opposing perspectives. Observers are interested in what systems link Japan to broader forces of social change around the world, but are also interested in the complex ways that Japan experiences change in the contexts of its particular cultural structures and movements. Particularly prominent in such contemporary analysis of social change in Japan has been the emphasis on the development of patterns of consumption and mass consumption as illustrating particular and universal patterns of Japanese social change (c.f. Clammer, 1997; Maclachlan, 2002). The use of this analytical framework of the market model (c.f. Carrier, 1997) to understand changes in Japan can be seen primarily to focus on the idea that while older generations were broadly ‘the producers’, today’s youth are ‘the consumers’, existing in a globally-connected transnational cultural supermarket of mass choice (Mathews, 2000; c.f. Clammer, 1997).

These observations relate to new ways of seeing and interacting with a world rich in possible choices, and emphasise that patterns of choice, opportunity, and mobility underlie, determine and direct generational change. In so doing, they are particularly relevant to the conclusions of this work. I would, therefore, like to bring together some of the observations I have made with reference to the fact that youth communities can be defined through patterns of consumption, focusing particularly upon how these consumer forces may not only help to explain why so many choices

exist, but also, in turn, how the emergence of a successful ‘consumer society’ may represent the foundational pillars of a sense of citizenship, both within the nation state and beyond it.

Production, Consumption and Citizenship

John Clammer has been prolific (1995, 1998, 2000), in picking up the threads of how consumerism, and mass consumption, can help us understand social change in Japan. Beginning by noting the importance of patterns of consumption and production as a core characteristic of social change in Japan, Clammer asserts that consumption may have represented, as far back as the Tokugawa era, emancipation from the power of political elites in Japanese society. The mass consumption that has emerged from a modern history of pre and postwar Japanese consumer movements since that time (c.f. Dower, 1999; Maclachlan, 2002), can thus be seen to continue this historical trend to find freedom from the political grasp and control of the state. Japan has been a society where “freedom for many has consequently come to be seen as freedom of consumption,” (1997: 158).

In verifying whether patterns of consumption still reflect historical trends to find freedom, Clammer is supported by Field (c.f. Clammer 1997: 157), who, in her study of modes of resistance in contemporary Japan, sees that for young people consumption may be a form of opposition and search for emancipation from what is perceived as a contemporary political climate of ‘soft fascism’. The conclusions of this thesis also powerfully support the notion that young people’s communities of

consumption are ways to seek out emancipation from the control of the sanctions of their elder's communities and worldviews. Indeed, I have suggested that it is from within their 'exposed' communities of consumption that young people locate a range of local choices and find forms of interaction distinct from those available to their elders (c.f. Ackermann, 2003).

The relevance of these concepts and their applicability to understanding generational change becomes more complex when we ask the question about whether is it patterns of consumption alone that define the young in relation their elders. While there seem to be common threads in terms of a search for improved choices and freedoms, there are also ways in which we can see the young offering significant generational departures.

For example, this thesis has emphasised not only the effect of mass consumption on the plurality of the youth experience in local communities, but also in the very representations that youth give themselves in the context of Japanese cultural and national collectives. Such representations are certainly 'new' in that they connect to and reorder Japan's relationships with foreign others in divergent ways. Such evidence seems to find convergence (as I have suggested in Part Three) with Clammer's observations that mass consumerism brings forward "as yet unseen subjectivities" (Clammer 1997; 43) arising from Japan's position in streams of globalisation:

Japan is enmeshed in the global network of knowledge, money, media and styles that influences, in varying degrees, every society. The result is that in

innumerable subtle ways the relationship of the individual to the ‘system’ has altered (1997: 155)

In this way are young people different from their elders *as a direct result* of their improved access to a *mass* consumer society that crosses national boundaries? Or, to put the question in a different way, in saying that mass consumption gives way to all these new ways of ordering and perceiving the world, are we forced also to make the statement that young people are consumers *in contrast* to an older generation defined through a contrasting production?

Certainly this has been the interpretation of much of the Japanese sociological literature, a literature which has found a public interested in latching on to the idea that their young are ‘parasites’ to generation which saw tremendous growth and productivity (Yamada, 1999; Sakurai, 2003; Kotani, 2003). Indeed, Yamada’s coining of the term ‘parasite singles’ to make reference to young people who live at home with their parents and therefore have little or no financial outgoings, has gained huge popularity across the national media and is now a household phrase in Japan.

Despite the seemingly evident reality that a mass consumer society has polarised the local and collective worlds of the young consumer, and the social worlds of his producing and providing elder (c.f. Kotani, 2003), we perhaps need to be cautious about the degree to which we adopt such a model for explaining the roots and precedents of societal change. This is because of two related reasons. The first, as pointed out by Carrier (1997) is that understanding social transition through the market model, “encourages casting people in terms of their market transactions, and

especially as consumers. In doing so, it highlights just one aspect of their existence...by ignoring the fact that people commonly are also workers or producers, and that even those who are not workers generally are dependant upon a worker for their consumption” (1997: 52).

Given that the market model can be restrictive in illustrating the holistic nature of the relationship between individuals and their existence within a surrounding set of market forces and transitions, is it possible to highlight other facets of young people’s lives as presented in this work which illustrate that they may also be producers? The conclusions in Part Two can, I suggest, be seen to point to further complexity in the involvement of the young within the market model. While it does indeed seem that many young people are dependant on their parents for their consumption (many of them live at home), here, they could also be seen as producers in the way that they facilitate and direct their elders to consume new information, use new technologies, and ‘buy into’ new youth-led worldviews.

The notion that the young may be playing multiple roles within the market model feeds into the second criticism of adopting an overly simplistic market model for the explanation of social change. And that is that as we have seen how consumption has been at the heart of each generation’s motivations in one way or other in different forms (c.f. Clammer, 1997; Sakurai, 2003). Indeed, in just the same way as we can see young generation as consumers in a way that their parents never were, their parents—the baby boomers—were also consumers in a way that *their* parents never were. The middle generation were in the process of freeing themselves from the binds of community and ‘buying up’ the values of freedom and independence (as well as

houses, cars, etc.) in fundamentally new ways (see Sakurai, 2003 and Chapter 3 this volume). Thus, patterns of consumption can be seen not only to define the youth generation, but rather, all generational movements for freedom and emancipation.

The conclusions of this work illustrate that for Japan's new generation the emancipation sought through consumerism is related to a need to induce pluralism and diversity within real and imagined communities. That this is occurring in the rich contexts of a transnational network of information and goods, a 'cultural supermarket' of opportunity (c.f. Mathews, 2000) that their elders were not a part of in the same way (c.f. Ching, 1996; Mathews, 2000; Hannerz, 1996), is significant. However, these new contexts do not, I suggest, give sufficient evidence fully to adopt the notion that the young should be seen as consumers while their elders are best seen as producers.

Perhaps, rather than consumption and production setting apart the generations in Japan, it may be more accurate to look at the ways in which they have, like mobility itself, meant different things to different people throughout Japan's modernity. The increase in the ability to consume may thus be a complementary and thus essential partner to the dynamic of mobility. This is particularly so as such a focus provides a way to illustrate how the flow of real and abstract goods and information works to empower and release people from aspects of their social environment seen as constraining (c.f. Mathews, 2000).

If consumption and production can be seen to complement the progress of generational change, as I have sketched out in this work, it is through the processes by

which the shift from one to the other has reflected and facilitated the individual's movement beyond the influences of the economic, imaginative, political and interpersonal designs of the state. In short, patterns of consumption and the processes involving generational shift towards consumption and away from production, have propelled and been propelled by increasingly imaginative and intellectual mobility and it is here that I locate its influence: at the core of a process of imaginative emancipation from the control of other people's designs.

A recent paper submitted to the Japanese Studies journal makes clear that recent consumer movements in Japan have served to raise awareness of individual rights and senses of democratic citizenship in profound ways.⁵⁸ If today's youth can be seen to be at the forefront of a mass consumer movement that connects Japan to a world beyond, then it may be these young people who emerge to represent these newly found and expressed freedoms with a set of highly appropriate local and collective representations of Japan in the world. Indeed, it may be the types of cultural and national identity that these young people develop in the years to come that will set a precedent for what will increasingly be seen as a movement towards more expanded forms of globally-conceived citizenship. It is to the examination of this possibility that I will turn in the second part of this chapter.

⁵⁸ This paper came to me for peer reviewing and as such the author's name has been withheld. The title of the paper is "Culture, Identity Formation, and the Postwar Japanese Consumer Movement". Both I and the other reviewer have recommended the paper for publication in the journal and therefore it will doubtless appear in 2004.

Plotting trajectories of change: Towards defining a state beyond the boundaries of the nation.

Many of us think of culture as something that endures changelessly, rooted deep in people's lives, immune to the vagaries of shifting ages... Thus the idea of Japanese culture evokes Kabuki, Noh, and Bunraku, and these are what shapes the image of Japan. Even though the forms of such institutions remain the same, however, their meaning changes with the passage of time from one era to another. Old forms are constantly being remolded and adapted to the requirements of the day, just as new traditions are being created all the time.

(Iyotani, 1995: 4-5)

In even posing the question of whether there is a state beyond the nation, we need to acknowledge that the requirements of today are particular to today—that our production of society is occurring in response to certain changes going on and being experienced by us. Here Iyotani continues by offering the notion that the recent common access to the narratives of multiculturalism helps us to recognise that ideas of culture and nation are always changing:

Multiculturalism deserves serious consideration, for it offers a perspective that confirms how illusory the purity of one's own culture is, and how necessary it is to reconfirm

the hybrid character inherent in any culture.

(1995:5)

In parallel to Iyotani's investigation of multiculturalism, Wallerstein reveals that our world system has already some common points of departure. Indeed, for Wallerstein, we almost all inhabit nation states which have become similarly configured.

Which state today does not have certain standard political forms: a legislature, a constitution, a bureaucracy, trade unions, a national currency, a school system? Few indeed! Even in the more particularistic arena of art forms, which country does not have its songs, its dances, its plays, its museums, its paintings, and today its skyscrapers? And are not the social structures that guarantee these art forms increasingly similar?

(1997: 93)

But does the fact that we now share common social and political structures mean that we can identity with a world above and beyond their borders and boundaries? Well, yes, and no, continues Wallerstein. In some ways, the nature of the state itself makes any common collective impossible because "defining a culture is a question of defining boundaries that are essentially political – boundaries of oppression, and of defence against oppression" (pp.94)⁵⁹. However, these boundaries are open to

⁵⁹ None of this talk of the nation as the world's most common imaginative container disregards the variety of other collective movements such as ethnic, regional, religious or indigenous. These are, for the most part, responses to nation states and/or to do with land ownership and cultural clashes that often show themselves in the national discourse.

redefinition and to a certain extent they have an arbitrary, shifting quality to allow for change and adaptation.

Perhaps the most recent example of the arbitrary nature of these national boundaries has been that in order to respond to a now world-wide division and flow of labour.

We see that they

must be permeable, and so they are. At the very moment that one has been creating national cultures each distinct from the other, these flows have broken down the national distinctions. In parts, the flows have broken down distinctions by simple diffusion. We talk of this when we speak of the steady internationalization of culture, which has become striking even in realms where it seemed least likely – in everyday life: food habits, clothing styles, habitat and in the arts.

(1997: 98)

So there has been a puncturing of cultural and national collectives by transnational products (imaginative and real) which come from other societies. Here at least we reaffirm that this new permeable nature of our national collectives has allowed such products in, and this has greatly aided in the pluralisation and access to *choice* that we identified as being important in defining the communities of consumption. But can we really suggest that these products, *in themselves*, inspire a sense of inclusivity in the world as part of a common culture?

There is a huge problem in making a conceptual leap suggesting that a permeable national state inextricably linked to the world capitalist system *necessarily* leads to globally relativised collective identities. Firstly, this is because the products related to such a system, though they have come from ‘outside’, become highly localised and contextualised: ‘re-made’ into the culture (Tobin, 1992) so as to become almost unrecognisable as ‘foreign’. (A Japanese child famously remarked on a visit to the USA “Wow, they have McDonalds here too!”). Secondly, in a related point, it is not through the ‘global’ system of movements that we, the ‘end-users’, of these real and imaginative products actually *feel* aligned. Because of the way in which they are used to give us legitimacy, identity, meaning and expression for use in our local contexts, these products appear on the ‘shelves’ of our local corner store and not in the superstores on the edge of town.

No, the link between global capitalism and global identity must not be seen to be contained in the access or exposure that people have had to certain ‘worldly’ or transnational products or technologies. Rather it must be seen that it is through a very fundamental *access to new choices* in their *local* contexts, and the meanings identities and expressions that people make from such choices, that these products have forged space for cultural pluralism and diversity.

It is this subtle difference in particular and universal meanings and constructs that Robertson (1997) attempts to address by summarising two kinds of explanations given for the “circumstance of identity representation in conditions of great global density and complexity” (pp.72). These, we see, are termed relativism and worldism:

Relativism... involves, for the most part, refusal to make any general, “universalizing” sense of the problems posed by sharp discontinuities between different forms of collective and individual life... Worldism is, in contrast... based upon the claim that it is possible and, indeed, desirable to grasp the world as a whole analytically; to such an extent that virtually everything of sociocultural or political interest which occurs around the globe – including identity presentation – can be explained, or at least interpreted in reference to the dynamics of the entire “world-system.” (pp.73)

Which of the two explanations have I attempted to give to the formation of transnational identity in Japan? On the one hand, I have emphasised that it is in the local and familial worlds which subsequent generations are finding renewed senses of mobility, and it is these which most influence and determine the collective representations of identity. This is an explanation which relates to Robertson’s *relativism*. However, I have also attempted to chart these responses as determined by industrialisation, seeing the generations depicted within this thesis as the ‘children of modernity’, whose diversifying forces present the conditions for local pluralism. This observation places these internal (relative) processes of change within a ‘world-system’ – a worldism – where we become subject to the forces above and beyond our locales.

But if transnational products are somehow giving us local choice which then manifests itself as intellectual and imaginative pluralism when it comes to how to identify oneself in the world, then can we see that there is a coming together of both

the relative and worldist explanations: that we can combine both together to paint a more accurate counterbalancing argument?

My own argument with respect to these matters involves the attempt to preserve *both* direct attention to particularity and difference, on the one hand, and to universality and homogeneity, on the other. It rests largely on the thesis that we are... witnesses to – and participants in – a massive, twofold process involving *the interpenetration of the universalization of particularism and particularization of universalism...*

(Robertson, 1997:73)

This massive process can seem complex in the ways that it has been expressed in the wealth of writing on transnationalism. But all that is being said here is that there are both local and global factors making claims on our identities, or more precisely in relation to this study: that we are referring to a social existence which encourages us to express our selves and our identities in *transnational* collective context *precisely because* our local experience has also become configured around a diverse and multi-contextual reality. Because the formation of identity requires continuity between the familial and collective worlds, there is little option but for one realm to influence the other.

Here we see that far from the transnational relationships and movements of people to different locales, the most powerful force of globalisation is ironically the way in which it presents its products as locally configured to local populations. That we *then* all play out new negotiations of new choice-empowered realities and identities vis-à-

vis our older generations becomes our most common – universal -- experience. And it is within these negotiations that we locate ourselves in patterns of thought of identity which increasingly make our collectives seem more commonly shared across a wide, and common, diversity and purpose.

Away from the literature looking at world systems, and into more ethnographically orientated approaches, we see that this perspective finds a common expression.

Here's Turner:

In relation to the claim that social experience and social processes are somehow deterritorialised, (by globalisation) it is also extremely important to note that people's experiences are heavily territorialised as experiences in relation to certain people in specific places that themselves are understood in relation to other experiences in other places. It is also important to note that these are not experiences of places that are in some way 'out there' but that the specific nature of the places people encounter or avoid are themselves constituted in these experiences.

(Turner, 2000: 56 see also Baumann, 1996 and Back, 1996)

So our definition of the type of imaginative society that the children of an 'established' modernity – our youth rather than their parents -- are bringing into existence must not then seem to transcend locality but must root itself within our familial experience and environment. It must acknowledge the forces of individual and neighbourhood agency – our *familial worlds* -- and look to the way in which it is these which come to influence the collective imagination. A common global system

is not collectively constructed, so to speak, but brought to life through common local experience of diversity. We are not able exactly to locate ourselves within a unifying common ecumene (see Hannerz, 1996), but – to paraphrase a well-worn Geertzian phrase – have become connected in that we begin to perceive ourselves as a case among cases, an example that human life has *locally* taken. It is this simultaneous involvement, interaction and construction of local solidarities with, through and against our older generations, which then make us aware that we share a transnational commonality, and comes to engender a sense of belonging to a global diverse community.

Global citizenship itself, then, far from being a new ‘post-modern’ phenomenon, simply represents – as the nation state used to – a new social and imaginative template into which the larger ideas about ourselves in the world can fit. Thus, although to many of us, the concept is a ‘lofty’ one, to many others – predominantly younger people in industrialized, or industrializing countries, it represents new social and imaginative opportunities that provide the appropriate degree of separation from the dominant narratives of their parents’ generation.

Beyond the Post-Modern: a citizenship society?

In that we see adjustments *to* modernity in the consolidation of familial and collective worlds of the young people herein, it would seem foolish to report that they are moving *on* from modernity into a “post” modern existence. If anything, they are

choosing to ignore certain aspects of their society's modernisation, to replace them with traditional ways of life that were in place before industrialisation (see Part Two).

Clearly, however, the term post-modern does attempt to acknowledge a departure from modernity. And in this way, we do need to provide a similar conceptual understanding—one that reflects that core elements of a society are being displaced in favour of a new approach to order the way in which society is seen and experienced.

Wallerstein (1997) again:

The states have had (the) upper hand for one simple reason: they have controlled the most physical force... In one case, they have used their force in to create cultural diversity, and in the other case to create cultural uniformity. This had made the states the most powerful cultural force in the modern world and the most schizophrenic.

(pp.99)

The national states have held a great degree of power in structuring their members' identities (see Part Two and Three). As we have seen in all the chapters herein, the Japanese state has influenced a wide range of ideas on how the individual should go about his or her life, or bind with his or her community, culture, or outside world. If we are talking about a process which empowers individuals to take control of their own construction of identity (to free themselves from the power that the state holds in directing these identities), by dissemination of a diverse range of products from which to construct our identities in the world, then surely we are making reference to a

democratic force of change? These are transitions which serve to emancipate individuals from the nation-building apparatus of the state and supply them instead with a range of tools and ideas to construct their own notions of themselves in the world. Where, traditionally, the invention of culture and nation has been “a weapon of the powerful” (Wallerstein, 1997: 99), the children of a “high” modernity⁶⁰ (our Japanese youth) are becoming somewhat immune to its effects as they begin to build their own collective temples of identity.

At the heart of these newer individually-driven identities is the transposition of their local manifestations to the global collective. The fact that they were constructed from a diverse range of choices means that they then *express* collective identities based on common diversity. And thus we see that notions of global citizenship represent that all-important extension of the imagined community: a new conceptual understanding of simultaneous human life transcending national borders.

Again, we could call this phenomenon of individual agency “post-modern”. But we won’t. The reason we could is because it speaks to a process that could be seen to ‘develop’ from modernism, and thus represents a progression from ‘pre-modern’ to ‘modern’ to the ‘now’ (potentially post-modern) state. But the reason we won’t is because, although convenient in the chronology of explanations for social change, ‘post-modern’ has several interpretations that go against the very core of this theory.

The most inaccurate of Postmodernism’s remits in the light of the theory this thesis espouses is that it speaks of significant departures from traditional social systems and

⁶⁰ I use the term high modernity to refer to the established state of industrialisation that Japan has reached. We have seen three generations of Japanese responding to the first organised introduction of modernity.

ways of life. I have attempted to demonstrate that in no way is a movement away from traditional forms of family or community an aspect of the movements I describe. Indeed, quite the contrary, in both the family and community we have seen a return to supportive social systems and small-scale collectives. These 'returns' have characterised and propped-up the efforts to induce the very freedoms that lead to the larger ability to imagine oneself as a global citizen. Likewise, the local worlds that global citizenship or transnationalism have been thought to have replaced (the culture, the nation) live on, indeed flourish under the new imaginative structures, supporting and giving them a base (although, like passport identities – see nation chapter – their salience and influence has altered).

The second most inaccurate Postmodernist extension is that our worlds, once solid, are now exploded apart – fragmented. Looking back at Part Three, Culture -- in particular, we could find some hint of this being the truth – in the fact that younger peoples' worlds are wildly diverse and exist, in their plurality, as huge mosaics of possible choices. But to do so pays little attention to how the world is experienced and constructed by the individual. For as we have seen in Part Three also, individuals' attempts to create themselves in the surrounding social world are part of a process of placing selves in culture that is as old and formulaic as humanity itself. There is nothing new in the method of placing selves in culture, only in the types and varieties of culture that make claims on the self.

Also, our Japanese youth are still very much children born from modernity (albeit high modernity). Far from being removed from its foundational conditions, they are using its very environment as a means to induce further democratic freedoms – further

centring themselves as the agents for the construction of their own familial and collective worlds. And, what's more, they are drawing on some of the traditional pre-modern social systems and identities to achieve this.

If these children of an established modernity – our Japanese youth – are doing something 'new', it is not from some post-modern reality that they construct themselves, but from a blend of the best of all of the worlds they perceive in existence around them. As their social existences become defined through choice and agency, so they take what they want from the modern and the traditional ways of life which surround them.

It is perhaps more accurate, then, to define a society based on such democratic agency to bring identities into existence as founded on a common, accessible and diversely imagined *citizenship*. Although, herein, I have only attempted to suggest a generational movement towards such a citizenship society, it seems useful to characterise the possible emergence of such a state in as accurate a way as possible. Again, then, it is far better to understand these new forms of society as representing forms of a common societal access to democratic 'citizenship', than to talk of the imminent coming of a post-modern society.

Citizenship helps to represent the emancipation from the power of the state in determining our identities. It also suggests the individual agency which we have identified – the ability to create of-the-moment solidarities based on diversity. On the local and global levels, understanding that we operate from a range of possible options to construct systems and identities, and do so in a collective space with others

around us exposed to similar diversities, makes us the agents of a democratic process of common citizenship.

A society based on common citizenship importantly offers the individual both the resources of freedom, and the local contexts and models of how to make that freedom meaningful. It is no good having ultimate freedom without knowing how to use it. We cannot have familial freedom without support structures, communities without neighbourhoods, cultures without traditions, or nations without territorial meanings. A society of citizenship gives us the tools to blend the local and the global in ways that make our contexts richer in meaning and crafted to suit circumstance.

The Precedents of the Citizenship society

There is much scepticism about the view that national identities are becoming less important, and also around the idea that societies are involved in any relative, or worldly, movement towards an acceptance of common diversity. Here, then, let me discuss what I see as the precedents of the citizenship society so that I might add further detail – and further definition – to these emerging states and make them seem more linked to certain necessary processes of change.

Firstly, these trends in the patterns of local mobility and generational rejection and change could be seen to be given life through the key shift in the *access to choice* and through the key locus of *familial systems freed from traditional sanctions*. Because both the diversification of the family unit and the community of consumption have

played such a key role in the establishment of a generational movement towards common citizenship, we would expect only to see these processes in action in societies connected to the capitalist world economy and with perhaps generally successful economies. This, then, suggests that these patterns relate primarily to, and are more observable in, industrialised societies.

More precisely, the power of these transitions only becomes evident and salient through the transformation and pluralisation of pre-industrial family systems (as we saw in part two). Thus it is important to understand that industrialised countries which have maintained traditional family systems without a precluding generational rejection of these traditional forms will not generally engender these new forms of local or global citizenship. Some preliminary observations I have made in research in the Veneto region of Italy suggest that the power of the family in maintaining homogeneous collective identities could indeed be preventing access to these youth subjectivities. In contrast to Japan, young Northern Italians seem less likely to have a concern with propagating visions of themselves as globally located, and often express their alignment with provincial national narratives. A conference on the Japanese family in comparative context at St. Antony's college, Oxford, in November 2002 emphasised the degree to which Italian family systems maintain traditional solidarities and memberships while the Japanese family has splintered into many forms, again suggesting possible evidence for this observation.

This reliance on re-forming family systems, however, does not preclude the facility of long term change. Instead of the drastic re-inventions, and later, gradual re-incorporation of tradition of the kind we have seen in Japan, it is theoretically possible

that the family could work 'modern' autonomy into a primarily traditional system. If it is necessary for the family to undergo a re-balancing, we should not suppose that it should only have to happen in one direction.

Problems of class also seem a vital factor in rendering a diverse local reality into a plural collective imagination. In the UK, where class classification still seems in force, those marginalised from national narratives which stress the multicultural nature of the island (at this time a view which comes from access to quality education) often take on ethnocentric and homogeneous identities in order to achieve an alternative voice or collective expression of their relative position to the 'mainstream' (Back, 1996). Here we see that class can very often determine that all important sense of mobility. This further complicates any generational explanations for social change as class often groups different generations together.

In response to the highly successful 'design' culture of the Meiji period (see Part Two, Family), industrialisation in Japan has been well controlled, resulting in a staggering 83% of the population (Ochai, 1994) who consider themselves as middle class. The class divide in Japan – or lack of it – is one explanation as to why an understanding of societal change through the generation can yield such interesting results and reveal so much of the core elements of change in this region. This is, of course, not to deny that Japan consists of a varied range of minority groups (Hane, 1982).

We might, however, conclude from a brief European survey, that the forces of change we have seen in Japan – occurring through the generation – are increasingly at work in societies which are slowly but surely addressing class issues. Class distinctions are

certainly less a source of collective identity now than they were for previous generations in Europe. As economic and social mobility improves, then, we can suggest that so do the opportunities for generational change and, ultimately, more diversity-encompassing worldviews.

Clearly, we see that the precedents of global citizenship are complex and varied (and another study dedicated to them would be required to do justice to this complexity). But, as I have tried to stress throughout this examination, there is perhaps one condition which speaks to a more universal human organisational quality than it does to complex sociological and/or demographic factors. This condition perhaps is more important than all the others combined because it pervades all of our lives and societal states and will continue indefinitely into the future of any common existence. It is the condition of the relative power we have to incite change.

Power Relations and Change

If we can see that the process towards global citizenship is one of emancipation from powerful state-designed collectives, then we must also see how vital the playing out of such struggles on the *local familial* level has been in setting it into motion. From seeing how Seijou attempts to resist the binds of his immediate familial obligations by inciting change for the sake of his daughters (Part Two, Family), to seeing how Tetsuo discards his *gaijin* complex having seen his friends return from the USA (Part Three, Culture), we see how important it is that we have access to the local ability to induce change.

After all, social change is a composite, aggregate culmination of countless individual decisions to *be or think differently* from our elders (see Mathews and White, 2003). It

is the culmination of many millions of individual, cross-generational negotiations on where the power lies in determining the unfolding of our life courses (conducted in families and communities) that our societies are most appropriately rendered. It is through the playing out of our individual attempts to seek space and mobility that we best represent our common humanity and its movement through time.

In Part Two, Family, I indicated that I would return and answer the question of how it is we impose social sanctions upon one another while, at the same time, we celebrate those who somehow find a way to move beyond these imposed restrictions. In the light of what we have since observed, can we perhaps best explain this by seeing that we all have a common need to empower our social existences with choice? And that because of this, when we see others breaking through the boundaries and barriers that societies have imposed, we celebrate their successes as somehow being ‘our own’—representing our needs and core desires?

In the tracing of mobility in Japan we have seen that on all levels of existence, successive generations have won freedoms – have further empowered themselves – away from the axis of other people’s control. Like the Japanese in this study, none of us come from a culture that is less than three generations removed from a time of massive power imbalances. Over these generations many of us—in all societies—have become, individually, more empowered to seek out our own livelihoods and our own solutions to increasing independent existences. In this, modernity has both helped and hindered. It has given us choices, but often dismantled ways of life.

We are clearly some way from achieving societies based on a common diversity, where all are given equal rights to citizenship—the kind of place where patterns of

global citizenship get set into motion. Indeed, in many places the influence of a variety of right-wing groups seems not to wane and sectarian violence continues unabated. However, the more we, as modernity's children, use the options modernity presents to locate ourselves in social systems and realities that provide further freedoms, *and choose* to integrate the best that fading ways of life have to offer our social systems, perhaps the closer we will move to such egalitarian collectives. The divisions of identity in our society are the relative degrees of power and autonomy that we have negotiated for ourselves, but it is through manipulation of these power relations, through careful negotiations, that we can quite literally change the format and nature of the world as it is seen and experienced.

To those economists who reject the social sciences with the assumption that it is only money that matters in moving the world, I offer the following: Money does not change society, it changes the very aspect of one generation's relationship with another, and in so doing it reconfigures the most local and familial – and through the hermeneutic circle, therefore, the most collective and the most global – of our cultural fault lines. Money can change people, but only people can change their society.

This observation is made even more stark in some of the most destitute and problematic regions of the world. It seems that to overcome unequal power relations and to set the next generation free from restrictive social systems, is one of humanity's great common struggles.

People have lost a lot already. They would pay the ultimate price, if they knew they were going to get something decent for their children. They've said this to me.

Abu Abbas is an Iraqi Shia Muslim⁶¹

The industrious prosperous and democratic regions of the world mustn't forget how much work has already been done to empower the younger generations of their modernities with access to a range of choices and identities (and what remains to be done). In the current and future climates of national and international diplomacy, of media trends and of cultural discourses, we must take great care to ensure that the key touchstones of unity through common diversity, are developed, are fostered and encouraged. If for no one else, this care should be for the next generation who will perhaps will look to us as never before as the creators or destroyers of a path towards a common country.

I offer no insights into the best way to achieve this but I hope to have demonstrated how such identities have emerged – how it has been the patterns of resistance, of freedom negotiated, of determined pluralism through which subsequent generations have realised an imagined world democratically determinable. If we want a world united in a common diversity – and let's face it, that's the only way we are going to be able to consolidate increasing desires to express the re-incorporation of cultural traditions, regionalisms and identities within some kind of common interlined global structure -- then we are going to have to continue to propel ourselves above and beyond patterns of thinking which are rooted in exclusivity, and we are going to have to do this against our nearest and dearest and in our very neighbourhoods and local communities.

⁶¹ From the website:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/spl/hi/middle_east/02/voices_from_iraq/html/abbas.stm

Charting Change through the Individual and the Generation

In all this we reaffirm the importance of studies like Mathews (2000) and Machin & Carrithers (1996) which attempt to locate the roots of expressions of cultural identity in terms of what constraints have been placed on – or removed from – the individual self's negotiation of meaning and identity throughout the life-course. Or as Roberson (1998) phrases this in relation to his study on Japanese working class lives:

...the construction of lifecourse, the trajectories of self(-identity) across the long course of experience, while significantly inter-related with individual self-identity, must also be seen within the broader enabling and constraining contexts...

(pp.192)

Such perspectives give us more than the ability just map out the possible trajectories of the collectives and groups with which the individual affiliates. They also allow us to illustrate how the universal need to produce solidarities within human society becomes made real to us in a diversity of particular intimate ways and settings.

So, as well as the reaffirming that anthropology's perspectives on the individual can yield results which show the interconnectivity of people and social environments, in our discussions on social change we also have seen how important *the generation* has been in charting the transitions I have identified. We have seen how a generational history of Japan has revealed patterns of imaginative and social mobility that have

allowed us to understand the changing relationship between collective identities and local circumstance. We have also seen how it is through the generation that we chart the onset of patterns of choice and agency and understand their use in local and global contexts.

If there is an imaginative landscape beyond modernity and the nation state, it is one whose genesis lies in the negotiated social freedoms of those most affected by the transitions *to* modernity and the nation state. Thus it is in through the study of the generation that we must turn for signposts and guides on the future shape and emerging identities of our societies. The generations contain the contours not only for the structure of our societies in response to our surrounding social environments, but also for patterns and rules of change which will become the familial realities and the collective identities of our future societies.

Charting the future

In his last remarks in his book *The Consequences of Modernity*, Giddens postulates what a post-modern (he uses the phrase in the non-loaded sense) world might look like. In beginning to characterise it, he begins to see that what at first seems a ‘utopian vision’ soon seems to take on necessary conditions that make it graspable and even observable. He says:

In a post-modern world, time and space would no longer be ordered in their interrelation by historicity... there would presumably be a renewed fixity to certain aspects of life that would recall some features of tradition. Such fixity would in turn provide a grounding for the sense of ontological security, reinforced by an awareness of a social universe

subject to human control. This would not be a world that ‘collapses outward’ into decentralised organisations but would no doubt interlace the local and global in complex fashion. Would such a world involve a radical reorganisation of time and space? It seems likely. With these sorts of reflections... we start to dissolve the connection between utopian speculation and realism.

(1990: 178)

In this study I hope to have illustrated some of the ways in which young people in Japan are beginning to move beyond their inherited societal forms in specific ways. We have seen that theirs is not a movement away from pre-industrial traditions, but a subtle blend of increased choice and pluralism reworked into local, traditionally defined contexts. This has given them a fixity and ontological security, such, indeed, that they seem increasingly able to approach transnational interaction with a confidence that any interaction will be based upon a common diversity. These new realities and subjectivities seem to have given them a degree of self determination – engendered a kind of social identity democracy – which places them firmly in an awareness that the social universe is subject to their control. Thus their local and global connections – their familial and collective worlds – have become interlaced in complex but discernable ways. Their re-conception of collective narratives, for instance, has been a result of this complex interlacing, and has brought with it new senses of location in time and space. These, then, can be seen to be some of the conditions of a resulting sense of themselves as local and global citizens.

But this study has been conducted in Japan. The majority world has not seen the same degree of economic wealth or prosperity that may indeed be crucial in setting off such patterns of upward imaginative mobility. While we may see many of Japan's youth as the children of an established modernity, many young people in other countries are fighting the social pressures and uncertainties that come with making the initial transitions into modern society from traditional values and systems. There are few things, then, more important in documenting the salient features of current social climate than addressing these fundamental generational transitions within our societies. For to do so reveals not just the struggles of the individuals involved in 'the thick' of shifting social systems, values and identities, but how some societies – and indeed generations – are beginning to overcome them.

If this argument seems to have stressed these emerging states at the expense of lamenting those aspects of society which remain in stasis, it has been with a concern further to close the gap between utopian speculation and realism which lies at the forefront of our societies of high modernity. As younger people's social worlds continue forcefully to displace the most recent generation's adaptation to modernity in every place, we must develop and perfect the tools to chart and foresee the emerging and possible futures that they bring with them. Only then can we begin to clear the ground for genuine understandings of the conditions for transnational culture, and take anthropology's office with us into a future where generations caught in the social transitions of modernity, and those beyond, gain precious opportunities to construct a world commonly understood from across all its great diversity.

Kora's philosophical tone continued and he began to talk to both Akira and me about his early life in the small mining town in which he grew up. He reminded us what a hold the community had on his father's way of life and thinking; how, although his father had tried to break a pattern of emotional distance and restriction, he had, ultimately failed. He talked about his brother, about how he had never managed to get out of the community, how he himself had felt guilty that he escaped and his brother did not.

Eventually, after an hour or so, the first light of the morning began to seep into our cocoon of reflection. We found our gradual ways to our places of rest – Kora as he was in a canvas chair on the balcony, and Akira just inside in the glass doors on sofa. On a *futon* which I had stretched out on the balcony a few meters from Kora I thought about Kora's hometown and his life there.

I had been there once, I remembered, in the mining town in which Kora had grown up. I had been to his old house, a small workers' house in a row of many other identical dwellings. I had met his mother, and also his brother, who at 47 still lived at the parental home.

I had sat down with his brother that evening. We had sat round the low *kotatsu* table on a summer's dusk close to *Obon* – the festival of the dead where I would come to see how this whole ex-mining community would rally round a festival involving ghosts, ghouls, and, most importantly, a great deal of sake. Kotaru was the antithesis of his brother; an introverted and guarded man who seemed to frown on any pretences of a free and dynamic life. He treated me with great respect and friendliness, while all

the while looking at his brother with suspicion as Kora told stories of life in the city and beyond, punctuated with his usual variety of witty remarks.

After dinner, when Kora was in the kitchen with his mother, Kotaru turned to me and said,

“It’s nice having Kora back here. I mean he drives me mad, but somehow his visits are always sort of, well... stirring. Like, after he leaves, it takes me a couple of days to get back to normal again!”

Kora’s life seemed to have been defined by his need both to escape and also to find a place in his family. But perhaps in the ways that he talked about his life in the city and his travels beyond Japan to his brother and mother, and in the fact that he thought to bring me to that place to introduce me to his family, he was attempting to bring back to them some of the life he had made for himself, to give them a piece of the opportunity that he had taken to transcend the limitations of a particular existence. And perhaps in return, he took from them a sense of his roots, his traditions, his home, that he used to bolster himself up in the world outside.

Now, back on the balcony outside the cabin, Kora seemed quite at peace. He lay in the canvas chair, eyes closed to the rising dawn. As the sunlight caught his face his eyebrows narrowed and his forehead furrowed. I glanced back from the balcony into the room and saw Kora’s sleeping son Akira. The sun’s first rays now lit up the soft restful expression on his face through the glass. And this image lingered as I too set my head to one side and slept under the widening horizon.

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